

Analysis of Vocabulary Errors in Descriptive Texts Written by Junior High School Students

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the types of vocabulary errors that occur in students' descriptive writing. The research employed a qualitative descriptive, conducted at MTs NW Suwangi, involving 30 students of class VIII B who were asked to write descriptive texts of 100–150 words. Data were collected through written tests and documentation of students' texts, which were then analyzed using an error analysis framework. The results indicate that there are four main types of vocabulary errors: pronoun misuse, word form errors, misuse of words, and redundancy/repetition. The most frequent error was pronoun misuse, which accounted for 58.3% of the total cases. Word form errors accounted for 25%, misuse of words 12.5%, and redundancy/repetition 4.2%. These errors occurred due to the influence of the first language, limited vocabulary mastery, and overgeneralization of English grammar rules. The findings of this study are expected to provide practical contributions for English teachers in designing more effective teaching strategies, particularly in addressing students' vocabulary errors in descriptive writing.

1. INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary plays a crucial role in English language learning because it supports students' ability to produce clear and accurate communication, especially in writing. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, students often face difficulties in expressing ideas, which leads to errors such as pronoun misuse, incorrect word forms, and inappropriate word choice. These vocabulary-related errors are common among junior high school students in Indonesia, where English is taught as a foreign language, and they significantly affect the quality of descriptive writing (Brooks et al., 2023).

Descriptive writing is one of the essential components in the English curriculum. Through this skill, students learn to describe people, objects, and places with clarity, detail, and structure. This activity requires learners to select precise vocabulary, build grammatically correct sentences, and organize ideas coherently so that readers can visualize what is described. In addition to improving linguistic skills, descriptive writing also develops creativity, observation, and critical thinking (Linggasari & Rochaendi, 2022). However, the

frequent appearance of vocabulary errors shows that many students still struggle to master this competence effectively.

Research has consistently shown the importance of vocabulary mastery in English proficiency. Brooks et al., (2023) reported that vocabulary knowledge is a predictor of reading and writing performance among English learners. Fitrawati & Safitri, (2021) found that grammatical and lexical errors are common in EFL students' essays, particularly in verbs, nouns, prepositions, and pronouns. Ali et al., (2023) also confirmed that lexical and structural errors remain a challenge for second language learners, underscoring the central role of vocabulary in academic writing.

Error analysis is an effective approach to understanding the learning process and identifying students' weaknesses. García, (2022) demonstrated that analyzing lexical errors provides valuable insights for teacher training and vocabulary instruction. Ali et al., (2023) also identified common writing errors such as tense misuse, subject–verb agreement, and inappropriate word choice, suggesting the need for targeted teaching strategies. Furthermore, Parameswari et al., (2024) proved that explicit instruction in grammar and vocabulary significantly improves learners' writing accuracy and confidence. These studies affirm that error analysis is not only diagnostic but also pedagogically beneficial.

Several studies have also examined vocabulary errors and teaching strategies in broader contexts. For example, Jamil & Mohd Rusli, (2024) identified reading difficulties among dyslexic students in Malay, while Fitrawati & Safitri, (2021) emphasized the importance of understanding sentence parts to reduce errors in English essays. Meanwhile, Abduh & Andrew, (2022) highlighted teachers' positive responses to curriculum reforms, which encouraged them to improve knowledge and teaching practices. Although relevant, these studies do not specifically address vocabulary errors in descriptive texts among junior high school students, leaving room for further investigation.

Research on error analysis has also been conducted in various linguistic contexts, such as lexical errors in Spanish as a foreign language (García, 2022), grammatical errors in Malay by international students (Abd Hamid et al., 2022), and language errors in Indonesian lecturers' academic writing (Dhari, 2020). These findings help identify general error patterns but may not fully represent the challenges faced by junior high school students in Indonesia. Preliminary observations at MTs NW Suwangi revealed recurring issues such as pronoun misuse, overgeneralization of grammar rules, and direct translation from Bahasa Indonesia. This indicates a clear research gap in exploring vocabulary errors in the local classroom context.

Therefore, this study aims to systematically identify and analyze the types of vocabulary errors found in descriptive texts written by eighth-grade students at MTs NW Suwangi and to examine the causes of these errors. The analysis is grounded in *Interlanguage Theory* (Selinker, 1972), *Error Analysis* Corder, (1974), and Krashen's (1982) *Natural Order Hypothesis*, which view errors as part of natural language acquisition rather than mere failure. By addressing this gap, the research contributes both theoretically—by deepening understanding of learners' interlanguage development—and practically—by providing implications for teachers to design more effective vocabulary-based instruction for improving descriptive writing skills.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted at MTs NW Suwangi on September 1, 2025, using a qualitative descriptive method. This approach was chosen because it is suitable for describing linguistic phenomena that occur

naturally without manipulating variables. The purpose was to analyze and describe the types of vocabulary errors found in students' descriptive texts.

The research subjects were 30 students from class VIII B. The selection of this class was based on purposive sampling with consideration from the English teacher. Class VIII B was chosen because it was regarded as representative of the average writing ability of eighth-grade students and had been consistently engaged in descriptive writing practice. Students were asked to write simple descriptive texts on familiar themes, such as describing their favorite people, animals, or objects.

The research procedure consisted of four stages: planning, preparation, implementation, and evaluation. In the planning stage, the researcher designed the research instruments, including guidelines for descriptive writing and a rubric for identifying vocabulary errors. The rubric, adapted from Dulay and Burt (1974) and Corder (1974), classified errors into four categories: pronoun misuse, word form errors, misuse of words, and redundancy/repetition. The preparation stage involved coordination with English teachers to determine the research schedule and prepare student worksheets. The implementation stage required students to produce descriptive texts of 100–150 words, which were then collected and analyzed. The evaluation stage was carried out by validating the findings with English teachers, summarizing the vocabulary errors and their possible causes, and identifying research limitations.

The instruments used in this study were (1) a written test, (2) documentation of students' writing, and (3) short interviews with teachers and students to confirm possible causes of errors. To ensure validity, the rubric and test instructions were reviewed by two English teachers. For reliability, two researchers independently analyzed a sample of students' work, and inter-rater reliability was established through comparison and discussion until agreement was reached.

The data were analyzed using the steps of error analysis, including identifying errors, classifying them according to the rubric, explaining their causes based on interlanguage and language transfer theories, and drawing conclusions regarding dominant patterns. This systematic procedure allowed the study to capture both the frequency and underlying factors of students' vocabulary errors in descriptive writing.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study analyzed vocabulary errors in descriptive texts written by eighth-grade students of MTs NW Suwangi. Based on the analysis, four main categories of errors were identified: pronoun misuse, word form errors, misuse of words, and redundancy/repetition. The distribution of cases is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of Vocabulary Errors in Eighth-Grade Students

Type of Error	Example of Error (with context)	Correction	Number of Cases	Percentage
Pronoun Misuse	"Its name is Rudi. He is my friend." (describing a person)	"His name is Rudi. He is my friend."	14	58.3%
Word Form Error	"She have a good attitude."	"She has a good attitude."	6	25%

	(describing a classmate)			
Misuse of Word	"She has a beautiful eye." (describing mother)	"She has beautiful eyes."	3	12.5%
Redundancy/ Repetition	"My favorite color is black with black." (describing favorite color)	"My favorite color is black."	1	4.2%
Total	—	—	24	100%

The table shows that pronoun misuse was the most frequent error (58.3%), followed by word form errors (25%), misuse of words (12.5%), and redundancy/repetition (4.2%). This pattern indicates that pronouns and word forms are particularly challenging for students compared to vocabulary choice and cohesion.

Discussion

Table 1 shows that vocabulary errors in descriptive texts written by eighth-grade students can be categorized into four main types, namely pronoun misuse, word form error, misuse of words, and redundancy/repetition. Each type of error has different characteristics but basically arises due to the influence of mother tongue transfer, overgeneralization of English grammar rules, and limited vocabulary. These findings are in line with the idea that errors reflect learners' interlanguage system (Selinker, 1972), which develops dynamically and is influenced by both L1 and L2 input.

First, pronoun misuse errors, such as in the expression *Its name is*, occur due to negative transfer from Indonesian. In the mother tongue, the word *namanya* can refer to people, animals, or objects. As a result, students tend to use *its* even when referring to humans. This phenomenon can be explained by *Interlanguage Theory* (Selinker, 1972), which describes how learners rely on L1 structures in constructing L2. Similar findings were reported by (Ali et al., 2023), who identified misuse of pronouns among Malaysian ESL students, and by Fitrawati & Safitri, (2021), who found pronoun errors as one of the recurrent mistakes in Indonesian EFL learners' essays.

Second, word form errors such as *He like play football* and *She have a good attitude* fall into the category of developmental errors. These errors indicate that students have not yet mastered English morphological rules, such as the addition of -s for third-person singular verbs. This is consistent with Krashen's (1982) *Natural Order Hypothesis*, which states that subject-verb agreement is typically acquired at a later stage. The same issue was also highlighted in (García, 2022), who observed that learners of Spanish often struggled with verb inflections due to incomplete grammatical acquisition.

Third, misuse of words, as seen in *beautiful eye*, reflects students' limited lexical repertoire and overgeneralization. They tend to use the adjective *beautiful* generically without considering collocational accuracy or plurality, resulting in expressions that are grammatically incorrect and semantically odd. This case aligns with Dulay & Burt's (1974) concept of overgeneralization and Corder's (1974) *creative construction hypothesis*, which explain how learners construct language based on limited input. In comparison, Fitrawati & Safitri, (2021) also reported that misuse of vocabulary is a frequent problem in Indonesian students' essays, confirming that this issue is not unique to one context.

Fourth, redundancy/repetition errors, such as *Favorit kalorr wit black*, reflect problems with spelling, cohesion, and inappropriate conjunction use. These errors arise not only from mother tongue transfer but also from limited mastery of English word forms. Similar redundancy cases have been noted by (García, 2022) in beginner learners of Spanish, showing that unnecessary repetition is a developmental feature across languages. Such findings reinforce the perspective of error analysis as a diagnostic tool Parameswari et al., (2024), which helps teachers identify recurring problems and provide targeted interventions.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings emphasize the need for more specific teaching strategies. Teachers should provide contextual exercises focusing on subject–verb agreement and appropriate pronoun use, supported by culturally relevant descriptive vocabulary. Vocabulary expansion can be achieved through thematic word lists and collocation practice (e.g., *beautiful eyes* vs. *beautiful place*), while redundancy can be reduced by teaching cohesion devices explicitly. Moreover, integrating error-based learning approaches (Corder, 1974) allows errors to become valuable input for instruction rather than mere indicators of weakness. By comparing these findings with earlier studies (Ali et al., 2023; Fitrawati & Safitri, 2021) it becomes clear that vocabulary errors are a persistent challenge in second language learning, particularly in EFL contexts, and thus require sustained pedagogical attention.

4. CONCLUSION

This study found that vocabulary errors in descriptive texts written by eighth-grade students at MTs NW Suwangi fall into four categories: pronoun misuse, word form errors, word choice errors, and redundancy or repetition, which arise from first language transfer, limited vocabulary mastery, and overgeneralization of grammar rules. These errors reflect the natural process of interlanguage development and therefore provide valuable insights for teaching. Pedagogically, the findings stress the importance of error-based instruction through contextual practice of pronouns, subject–verb agreement, and descriptive vocabulary, supported by rich and meaningful language input. Nevertheless, the study is limited by its small sample size, focus on a single school, and the absence of inferential statistical testing, which restricts the generalizability of results. Future research should expand the sample across different contexts, employ mixed-method or quantitative designs, and test specific instructional interventions to evaluate their effectiveness in reducing vocabulary errors and improving students' writing skills.

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