

**AN ERROR ANALYSIS ON STUDENTS' WRITING DESCRIPTIVE
TEXT IN SMA NEGERI 1 AIR JOMAN****Deo Fandy Mahendra Ritonga¹, Putri Lidiana Permata Sari²**

Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Asahan

e-mail: deofandy076@gmail.com**Abstract**

This research analyzes grammatical errors in the descriptive writing of tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Air Joman in the 2025/2026 academic year. The study aims to identify the types of errors and determine the most frequent one. A descriptive qualitative method was used, and Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's Surface Strategy Taxonomy served as the analytical framework. Twenty-five students participated, and their descriptive texts were examined for four types of errors: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The findings revealed 122 errors, including 50 omissions (40.98%), 21 additions (17.21%), 39 misformations (31.97%), and 12 misorderings (9.84%). Omission emerged as the dominant error, showing students' difficulty with articles, linking verbs, and plural forms. Misformation was also significant, indicating challenges in selecting correct word forms. The results show that students' writing is affected by fundamental grammatical weaknesses, suggesting the need for stronger grammar instruction and more writing practice.

Key Words: Error Analysis; Descriptive Text; Students' Writing; Grammar**INTRODUCTION**

English is widely recognized as an essential international language used across various domains, including communication, science, education, and technology. In Indonesia, English is taught as a compulsory subject at the secondary school level, and students are required to develop proficiency in the four fundamental skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. One of a basic language skill is writing. Writing is a fundamental element in English, enabling students to express their thoughts, information, and ideas in both academic and communicative contexts (Ginting & Aryni, 2025). Writing is an essential academic skill and a multifaceted cognitive process that encompasses more than only constructing technically right sentences; it necessitates the capacity to articulate, structure, and critically assess ideas coherently (Supiatman et al., 2025). Despite its importance, many Indonesian learners continue to face difficulties when producing written English texts, particularly due to their limited mastery of grammatical rules and linguistic conventions (Lestari Oriana, Supiatman Lis, 2023).

Descriptive text is one of the main genres emphasized in the Indonesian senior high school curriculum. Its purpose is to describe people, places, objects, or animals in a way that allows readers to form clear mental images. Mastery of descriptive writing contributes significantly to students' grammatical accuracy, vocabulary development, and ability to organize ideas logically. However, numerous studies and classroom observations show that students frequently make errors when constructing descriptive texts (Panjaitan et al., 2023). These errors often appear in the areas of spelling, grammar, sentence formation, and word choice, suggesting that many learners struggle to meet the linguistic and structural demands of descriptive writing.

In analyzing students' writing performance, the framework developed by (Dulay, Burt, and Krashens 1982) provides a comprehensive approach known as the Surface Strategy Taxonomy. This taxonomy classifies linguistic errors into four categories: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Omission refers to the absence of required grammatical items; addition involves the presence of unnecessary elements; misformation occurs when learners use incorrect forms; and misordering involves incorrect arrangement of morphemes or word groups. According to (Dulay, Burt, and Krashen 1982), these errors represent typical difficulties encountered by learners of English as a foreign language and offer valuable insights into the underlying linguistic challenges faced by students (Lidiana & Sari, 2023).

Students are expected to produce descriptive texts that are grammatically accurate, well-organized, and meaningful. They also generally hope that learning descriptive writing will help them understand English grammar more clearly, expand their vocabulary, and reduce common errors such as incorrect word choice, tense misuse, and sentence structure problems (Sari, Putri Lidiana Permata, Supiatman & Aryni, 2023). However, linguistic challenges such as mother-tongue interference, incomplete understanding of grammar rules, and limited vocabulary mastery often lead students to commit frequent errors in their writing. As noted by (Dulay, Burt, and Krashen 1982), such errors can be traced back to developmental, interlingual, or intralingual factors, making error analysis essential for understanding learners' language acquisition processes.

Preliminary observations conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Air Joman revealed that tenth-grade students frequently produce grammatical errors when writing descriptive texts (Rahmah et al., 2025). Some students omit essential grammatical components such as articles or verbs, while others add unnecessary words, misform word structures, or misorder sentence elements. Errors in vocabulary selection, sentence structure, and word order were also commonly found. These recurring problems suggest that students have not yet developed sufficient control over English grammatical rules and continue to experience difficulties in organizing their ideas into clear, correct, and coherent written texts.

Given the significance of writing skills in English language learning and the frequency of errors observed in students' descriptive texts, conducting an error analysis is necessary. By identifying the types and frequency of errors, teachers can better understand which aspects of writing pose the greatest challenges for learners. This aligns with the assertion by (Dulay, Burt, and Krashen 1982) that error analysis

provides valuable insights into learners' interlanguage development and helps educators design more effective instructional strategies. Therefore, the present study, entitled "*An Error Analysis on Students' Writing Descriptive Text at Grade X of SMA Negeri 1 Air Joman in 2025/2026 Academic Year*," aims to classify the errors found in students' descriptive texts and identify the dominant error type. The results are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to improving English writing instruction and reducing students' grammatical errors.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to investigate students' grammatical errors in writing descriptive texts. A qualitative approach was selected because it allows the researcher to examine natural language use in depth, as suggested by Sugiyono, who states that qualitative research explores natural conditions in which the researcher acts as the primary instrument. The design aimed to describe the types and frequency of errors without manipulating variables. The analysis was guided by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982) Surface Strategy Taxonomy, which classifies learner errors into omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. This framework was chosen to provide a systematic and detailed description of students' grammatical performance and to identify the dominant error type.

Participants and Research Context

The study was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Air Joman, located on Jalan Lubuk Palas, Asahan Regency, North Sumatra. The research took place in November 2025 and involved 25 tenth-grade students (Class X-2) during the 2025/2026 academic year. These students served as the subjects of the study, and their descriptive writing texts functioned as the core data. The selection of participants was based on the school's curriculum, which requires students to master descriptive text as one of the essential writing genres.

Instruments and Data Collection

The primary instrument in this qualitative study was the researcher, who planned, collected, and analyzed the data. As stated by Arikunto, research instruments serve as tools to obtain accurate and reliable information, and in qualitative inquiry, the researcher plays a central role in interpretation. A writing test functioned as a supporting instrument. Students were instructed to write a 150–200-word descriptive text within 45 minutes. They were offered familiar topics—"My Best Friend," "My School," or "My Favorite Place"—to encourage authentic expression. The writing task was administered during regular English class sessions, supervised by both the researcher and the English teacher to ensure independent work. Students' texts were collected, coded, and prepared for systematic analysis using the Surface Strategy Taxonomy.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection followed four stages: (1) preparation of test instructions, topic selection, and collaboration with the classroom teacher; (2) administration of the writing test under controlled conditions; (3) collection and coding of all student compositions; and (4) initial identification of grammatical errors in the texts. These

steps ensured that the data reflected students' genuine writing performance and adhered to the reliability standards outlined by Sugiyono.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the qualitative procedures proposed by Miles and Huberman, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. First, errors in each student's writing were identified by examining sentences containing grammatical problems. Second, errors were classified based on Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982) four categories: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Third, errors were described in detail with reference to correct linguistic forms. Fourth, the frequency of each error type was calculated using the formula $P = (F/N) \times 100\%$, where P represents the percentage, F the frequency of each error type, and N the total number of errors (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). Finally, the sources of errors—such as interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, or incomplete grammatical knowledge—were analyzed to interpret students' learning difficulties. These steps enabled a comprehensive understanding of the grammatical challenges faced by students when composing descriptive texts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Following the data collection, the researcher analyzed each student's writing by identifying errors and classifying them into four categories according to the Surface Strategy Taxonomy: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Each error found in the students' writing was examined carefully to determine the grammatical aspect involved, such as the use of "to be," verb forms, article usage, plural forms, adjective order, and sentence structure.

The Data of Students' Omission Errors

This error is characterized by the absence of an item that must appear in a well formed utterance. Morpheme or word in a sentence is a potential candidate for omission, some types of morphemes are omitted more than others. In this research, the writer found some items of errors. The are some data are the samples of the errors committed by the students.

Tabel 1 Omission Errors

NO	The Errors	Students' Explanation	Correction
1	Decided to go the same junior high school	Omission of preposition : to	Decided to go to the same junior high school
2	I have bestfriend,	Omission of article: a	I have a bestfriend,
3	the name is Annisa Afrildayani Nasution.	Omission of article: the	her name is Annisa Afrildayani Nasution.
4	And lunch break didn't feel the same	Omission of article: the	And the lunch break didn't feel the same
5	I have bestfriend in senior high school	Omission of article: a	I have a bestfriend in senior high school
6	If we in classroom	Omission of to be: are	If we are in classroom

7	I have a homes,	Omission of noun: homes	I have a home
8	one is middle room.	Omission of article: a	one is a middle room
9	We are in the same kindergarten and elementary school	Omission of noun: schools	We are in the same kindergarten and elementary schools
10	He is good listener	Omission of article: a	He is a good listener
11	I have bestfriend her name is afifah	Omission of article: a	I have a bestfriend her name is afifah
12	I have bestfriend in my class	Omission of article: a	I have a bestfriend in my class
13	I have new friend , she is Walida	Omission of article: a	I have a new friend , she is Walida
14	Walida single, she is sad girl because she doesn't boyfriend	Omission of to be: has	Walida single, she is sad girl because she doesn't has boyfriend.
15	My house not large and not very small,	Omission of to be: is	My house is not large and not very small,
16	He truly my bestfriend	Omission of to be: is	He is truly my bestfriend
17	have new friend when	Omission of article: a	have a new friend when
18	She very kind to me	Omission of to be: is	She is very kind to me
19	She is smart woman and creative woman.	Omission of article: a	She is a smart woman and creative woman.

The Data of Students' Addition Errors

Addition errors are a type of mistake that occur when learners include extra linguistic elements that do not belong in a properly constructed sentence. Such errors indicate that students sometimes overgeneralize grammatical rules or add components that disrupt the intended structure.

Tabel 2 Addition Errors

NO	The Students' Errors	Explanation	Correction
1	We are always go to school	Addition of to be: are it should be omitted	We always go to school
2	He is usually use watch in his right hand	Addition of to be: is it should be omitted	He usually use watch in his right hand
3	We are always go together.	Addition of to be: are it should be omitted	We always go together.

4	She is my little friends,	Addition of noun: friends it should be omitted	She is my little friend
5	Spend timer together	Addition of noun: timer it should be omitted	Spend time together
6	She has a brown eyes, short hair, fat body	Addition of article: a it should be omitted	She has brown eyes, short hair, fat body
7	It has more function not as a homes	Addition of noun: homes it should be omitted	It has more function not as a home
8	He is always partner for me	Addition of to be: is it should be omitted	He always partner for me
9	We are always hangout together	Addition of to be: are it should be omitted	We always hangout together
	she is study in a university.	Addition of to be: is it should be omitted	she study in a university.
10	I have a homes.	Addition of noun: homes it should be omitted	I have a home
11	Last years, my family	Addition of noun: years it should be omitted	Last year, my family
12	We are always go to school	Addition of to be: are it should be omitted	We always go to school

.The Data of Students' Misformation Erorr

Misformation errors refer to the use of an incorrect morpheme or grammatical structure within a sentence. These errors occur when learners select a form that is inappropriate or inconsistent with standard grammatical rules. In this study, several students produced misformation errors by applying incorrect grammatical forms in one or more parts of their sentences.

Tabel 3 Misformation Erorr

NO	The Students' Errors	Explanation	Correction
1	I thought we wouldn't be in the same class	The word " thought " should be replaced by " thought "	I thought we wouldn't be in the same class
2	He is my bestfriend in SMK	The word " he " should be replaced by " she "	She is my bestfriend in SMK
3	My fried's name is Indah	The word " fried's " should be replaced by " friend's "	My friend's name is Indah

4	Our friend didn't dissaper	The word "dissaper" should be replaced by "dissappear"	Our friend didn't dissappear
5	I am happy with They	The word "They" should be replaced by "Them"	I am happy with Them
6	My bestfriend they name is	The word "They" should be replaced by "Their"	My bestfriend their name is
7	A calm atmosphere adn a perfect escape from daily busynes	The word "adn" , "perfect" , "busyness" should be replaced by "and" , "perfect" , "business"	A calm atmosphere and a perfect escape from daily busines
8	Green fields and tall tress	The word "Tress" should be replaced by "Trees"	Green fields and tall trees
9	It is not more function not as home	The word "is" should be replaced by "has"	It has not more function not as home
10	When we wehe 5 years old	The word "wehe" should be replaced by "were"	When we were 5 years old
11	Beautiful memory with him is when we climb	The word "is" should be replaced by "was"	Beautiful memory with him was when we climb
12	he is friendly sometimes unfriendly	The word "he" should be replaced by "she"	she is friendly sometimes unfriendly
13	I have my bestfriend in senior high school.	The word "my" should be replaced by "a"	The word "he" should be replaced by "she"
14	Her name is Irfan Pinagungan.	The word "her" should be replaced by "his"	His name is Irfan Pinagungan.
15	have my mother, she so beautiful	The word "my" should be replaced by "a"	have a mother, she so beautiful
16	And wanthed the sused	The word "wanthed" , "sused" should be replaced by "watched" , "sunset"	And watched the sunset
17	Friendship didn't disapper	The word "disapper" should be replaced by "dissappear"	Friendship didn't disappear

The Data of Students' Misordering Erorrns

Misordering errors arise when learners position a morpheme or a group of words in an incorrect location within a sentence. This type of error does not involve

missing or extra elements; rather, the problem lies in the improper sequence of the components.

Tabel 4 Misordering Errors

NO	The Students' Errors	Explanation	Correction
1	Without realizing our that friendship	Incorrect placement of word "our" should be placed after "that"	Without realizing that our friendship
2	Our communication single every day	Incorrect placement of word "single" should be placed after "every"	Our communication every single day
3	He has a good confident self	Incorrect placement of word "confident" should be placed after "self"	He has a good self confident
4	there is a room middle.	Incorrect placement of word "room" should be placed after "middle"	there is a middle room
5	I really like color blue	Incorrect placement of word "color" should be placed after "blue"	I really like blue color
6	She is girl beautiful in the world.	Incorrect placement of word "girl" should be placed after "beautiful"	She is beautiful girl in the world.
7	They very are beautiful	Incorrect placement of word "very" should be placed after "are"	They are very beautiful
8	My family bought a house new	Incorrect placement of word "bought" should be placed after "new"	My family bought a new house

Tabel 5 The Classification of Errors Committed by Each Students

No	Students' Name	Kind of Errors				Σ Errors
		OM	AD	MF	MS	
1	Riska Anjani	1	-	2	1	3
2	Putri Apsah	-	1	1	1	3
3	Nur Alvinny Syahputri	1	1	1	1	4
4	Arfa Sa'ad	2	1	1	1	5

5	Karuilah Zahrah Gurning	1	-	1	-	2
6	Ahmad Bais	2	1	2	1	6
7	Nadila Yusyirwan	-	-	4	-	4
8	Nur Indri	2	1	1	1	5
9	Shafa Auroura Putri	1	-	1	-	2
10	Ade Matasya	1	1	5	-	7
11	Ade Pajri adriansah	1	3	-	-	4
12	M. Ridho Pratama	1	1	-	-	2
13	Hayatul Husnah	-	-	-	-	-
14	Rehan Armand	4	1	3	1	9
15	Rizka azani	2	-	2	1	5
16	Riski Frdiansyah	3	1	1	-	5
17	Sahil	4	-	-	-	4
18	Sandi Satya Prayoga	2	2	2	-	6
19	Suci Erianti	4	1	3	1	9
20	Tantri Kumalasari	2	-	1	1	4
21	Troi Dwi Anggga	5	1	2	1	9
22	Muariff Sidiq	2	3	2	-	7
23	Dinda Natasyah	4	1	2	1	8
24	Adelia rahmadani	4	-	1	-	5
25	Chelsea Marianti	2	1	1	-	4
Σ Errors		50	21	39	12	122

Explanation :

OM : Omission errors

AD : Additon errors

MF : Misformationn errors

MS : Misordering errors

The Percentage of Students' Errors in Writing Descriptive Text

After gathering the students' narrative writing data, the researcher analyzed each paragraph using the Surface Strategy Taxonomy, which includes four types of errors: Omission, Addition, Misformation, and Misordering. Each error found in the students' work was then categorized according to these types, and the frequency of occurrence for each category was identified. To determine the percentage distribution of these errors, the researcher applied the following formula:

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

Table 6 Accounting The Percentage of The error

No	Kinds of Error	Frequency	Percentage
1	Omission	50	$P = \frac{50}{122} \times 100\% = \frac{5000}{122} = 40,98\%$
2	Addition	21	$P = \frac{21}{122} \times 100\% = \frac{2100}{122} = 17,21\%$
3	Misformation	39	$P = \frac{39}{122} \times 100\% = \frac{3900}{122} = 31,97\%$
4	Misordering	12	$P = \frac{12}{122} \times 100\% = \frac{1200}{122} = 9,84\%$

Tabel 7 Recapitulation of the percentage in type of the errors

No	Types of Errors	Total of Error	Percentage of Errors
1	Omission	50	40,98%
2	Addition	21	17,21%
3	Misformation	39	31,97%
4	Misordering	12	9,84%
TOTAL		122	100%

Based on the results of the analysis, the total number of errors is 122 items. They were 50 items of omission errors, 21 items of addition errors, 39 items of misformation, and 12 items of misordering items. After getting the data, the writer made the percentage of the result of analysis. The result of this analysis showed that the highest percentage of errors is omission (40,98%). The lowest one is misordering (9,84%), while the other types of errors were misformation (31,97%), and addition (17,21%).

Discussions

The analysis of students' descriptive writing revealed four types of grammatical errors—omission, addition, misformation, and misordering—based on Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's Surface Strategy Taxonomy. Omission emerged as the most dominant error, indicating that many learners had not yet internalized essential grammatical elements such as articles, linking verbs, and plural markers. These items are often omitted because they are absent or not obligatory in Indonesian, supporting Dulay et al.'s view that learners frequently omit forms with low semantic load. The strong influence of Indonesian sentence patterns, such as the absence of *to be*, also contributed to errors like *She very kind* and *He truly my bestfriend*.

Misformation errors, the second most frequent type, reflected learners' partial mastery of English forms. Students often selected incorrect pronouns or verb forms, demonstrating incomplete understanding of morphological rules and a reliance on phonetic approximations. These patterns align with the interlanguage hypothesis, suggesting that learners are still testing hypotheses about English grammar and have not fully mastered its structural distinctions.

Addition errors appeared as a result of overgeneralization, particularly in the insertion of unnecessary *to be* before verbs (e.g., *We are always go*). These errors show that students sometimes apply previously learned rules too broadly and lack clear distinctions between nominal and verbal predicates. Misordering errors, although least frequent, highlighted difficulties with English word order, especially in adjective placement. The transfer of Indonesian syntactic structures led to unnatural sequences such as *color blue* or *girl beautiful*.

When compared with previous studies, the findings are consistent with those reported by Kurnia (2020), Handayani (2020), and Marpaung (2021), all of whom found omission as the most common error among Indonesian EFL learners. These similarities indicate that the grammatical issues identified in this study represent broader patterns in Indonesian secondary-school contexts.

The results show that students still struggle with fundamental grammatical features required for accurate descriptive writing. Omission and misformation errors point to gaps in morphological and syntactic knowledge, while addition and misordering errors suggest difficulties in applying rules consistently. These findings highlight the need for more explicit grammar instruction, increased writing practice, and error-focused feedback to help students internalize English structures and improve their writing accuracy.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the grammatical errors found in the descriptive writing of tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Air Joman in the 2025/2026 academic year using Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's Surface Strategy Taxonomy. From 25 student compositions, a total of 122 errors were identified across four categories: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The presence of all error types demonstrates that students still face substantial challenges in applying fundamental English grammatical rules when composing descriptive texts.

The findings indicate that omission was the most dominant error, showing that students frequently excluded essential grammatical elements such as articles, linking verbs, plural markers, and necessary nouns or pronouns. These omissions often resulted in incomplete or unclear sentences, reflecting a lack of mastery of basic English sentence structures. Misformation errors also appeared prominently, illustrating students' difficulties in selecting appropriate word forms and applying grammatical rules consistently, often due to limited vocabulary and overgeneralization.

Addition errors, though less frequent, showed students' tendency to insert unnecessary elements—especially the misuse of *to be*—which disrupted sentence structure and reflected misconceptions about English grammar. Misordering errors were the least common but still indicated challenges in arranging words and phrases according to English syntactic patterns.

Overall, the study concludes that the students' descriptive writing abilities are hindered by multiple grammatical weaknesses that affect accuracy, coherence, and clarity. The dominance of omission and misformation errors suggests that learners have not yet fully internalized essential grammatical concepts. These findings underscore the need for more explicit, systematic, and continuous grammar-focused instruction, supported by targeted writing practice and constructive feedback, to help students improve their proficiency in writing descriptive texts.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Dulay, Burt, and K. (1982). *No Title*.

Ginting, I. B. br, & Aryni, Y. (2025). Enhancing Descriptive Writing Skills Through Culturally Responsive Teaching in Class IX of SMP Negeri 2 Pulo Bandring. *LintekEdu: Jurnal Literasi Dan Teknologi Pendidikan*, 6(2), 543–559. <https://ejournals.com/ojs/index.php/jltp/article/view/2321>

Vol. 4 No. 1, Januari 2026, p. 177 – 188

Available online <http://jurnal.una.ac.id/index.php/jeeli/index>

Lestari Oriana, Supiatman Lis, S. P. L. P. (2023). *THE EFFECT OF USING REDW S TRATEGY ON S TUDENTS ' R EADING C OMPREHENSION OF N ARRATIVE T EXT AT THE X G RADE OF SMA N EGERI 1 A IR J OMAN IN 2022 / 2023 A CADEMIC*. 12(02), 108–121.

Lidiana, P., & Sari, P. L. P. (2023). *The Effect of Using Chain Writing Method on Students ' Writing Skill of Recount Text at Grade XI of SMA Swasta Daerah Air Joman in 2022 / 2023 Academic Year*. 4(2), 116–127.

Panjaitan, A., Lidiana, P., & Sari, P. (2023). *THE EFFECT OF TEAMS GAMES TOURNAMENT (TGT) STRATEGY WITH THE HELP OF WORD WALL APPLICATION ON THE S TUD EN T S ' M AS TE RY O F S IM P L E P R E S EN T*. 19(1), 58–71. <https://doi.org/10.30829/vis.v>

Rahmah, S., Saragih, D., Lidiana, P., Sari, P., Suciati, R. T., Putri, A., Aulia, R., Arianti, S. D., Safira, A., Hasanah, H., Harahap, R., Manurung, I. Z., Putri, H., Matematika, P., Asahan, U., Inggris, P. B., Asahan, U., & Asahan, U. (2025). *Pelatihan Pembuatan Media Pembelajaran Matematika Berbasis Teknologi Digital*. 5(1), 1–7.

Sari, Putri Lidiana Permata, Supiatman, L., & Aryni, Y. (2023). *Improving Students ' Literacy : Successful Efforts of t he School Literacy Movement (SLM)*. 8(2), 236–242.

Supiatman, L., Sonita, E., Sirait, I., & Sari, K. (2025). Exploring Effective Approaches in Teaching Writing in EFL Classes: A Qualitative Descriptive Study. *Cendekia Pendidikan*, 16(12), 21–30. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.99534/n1rq7a81>