



## An Analysis of Errors in the Use of the Simple Present Tense in Descriptive Texts Written by Tenth-Grade Students at Muhammadiyah 8 Private Senior High School Kisaran

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### ABSTRACT

Accurate use of the simple present tense is essential for producing effective descriptive texts, yet learners of English as a Foreign Language frequently encounter systematic grammatical difficulties in applying its rules. This study investigates the types and underlying causes of simple present tense errors in descriptive texts written by tenth-grade students at Muhammadiyah 8 Private Senior High School Kisaran. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the study analyzed data from 28 students through a controlled writing test, semi-structured interviews, and a digital questionnaire, using Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's Surface Strategy Taxonomy as the primary analytical framework. The findings identified 149 errors: misformation was the most frequent category (72; 48.32%), followed by omission (39; 26.17%), misordering (24; 16.11%), and addition (14; 9.40%). Methodological triangulation revealed that these errors primarily resulted from interlingual interference, particularly direct translation from Indonesian, and intralingual interference involving overgeneralization of the copula *to be* and difficulties with subject-verb agreement, while cognitive overload during rapid writing further intensified error production. The study concludes that these grammatical errors represent systematic interlanguage development rather than random performance lapses, highlighting the need for explicit, contextualized grammar instruction and targeted error-awareness strategies in English as a Foreign Language writing classrooms.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Submitted 28 08 2026  
Revised 20 09 2026  
Accepted 26 09 2026  
Published 05 10 2026

### KEYWORDS

Descriptive text; error analysis; interlanguage; simple present tense; surface strategy taxonomy.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30743/bahastra.v11i1.14366>

## INTRODUCTION

Writing occupies a central position in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education because it represents one of the most cognitively and linguistically demanding forms of language production. Effective writing requires learners to simultaneously manage vocabulary, grammatical structures, idea organization, and genre-specific conventions to communicate meaning accurately and coherently. Among the grammatical systems that learners need to master, the simple present tense plays a particularly important role in functional genres such as descriptive texts because writers use it to express permanent facts, objective characteristics, and general truths about a subject (Nattinger, 2014). Campbell and Storch (2011) emphasize that the consistent use of appropriate tense forms constitutes an essential lexico-grammatical feature of effective written production. Systematic deviations from these grammatical conventions can consequently compromise the clarity, accuracy, and communicative effectiveness of students' descriptive texts.

Preliminary classroom observations at Muhammadiyah 8 Private Senior High School Kisaran revealed frequent and recurring grammatical inaccuracies in students' descriptive writing. The observed deviations involved multiple structural patterns, including the omission of the *-s/-es* inflection for third-person singular subjects, inappropriate insertion or omission of the copula *to be*, confusion in the use of the auxiliary verbs *do* and *does*, and syntactic patterns influenced by Indonesian. The recurrence of these patterns suggests that students' difficulties extend beyond occasional performance lapses and may reflect systematic features of their developing English linguistic system. From an interlanguage perspective, learner errors provide evidence of the transitional grammatical system that students construct while acquiring a target language. Austin and Riveros (2025) similarly conceptualize learner errors as valuable indicators of the developmental grammar underlying second-language acquisition.

*Error Analysis* provides an appropriate applied-linguistic framework for systematically examining these recurring grammatical difficulties. In contrast to the earlier Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, which attempted to predict learner

difficulties primarily by comparing first- and second-language structures, *Error Analysis* examines errors that learners actually produce to identify patterns within their developing interlanguage. Within this analytical tradition, the Surface Strategy Taxonomy discussed by Spring et al. (2022) offers a systematic means of classifying errors according to observable modifications of target-language structures, including omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. This classification enables researchers to determine how learners modify grammatical forms when producing written language. Examining these observable patterns can also provide an empirical foundation for investigating the linguistic and cognitive factors underlying students' grammatical difficulties.

Previous research has extensively documented grammatical challenges in the writing of learners of English as a Foreign Language. Studies conducted in Indonesian secondary school contexts, including Melai and Abidin (2020), demonstrate that students consistently experience difficulties with grammatical features such as subject–verb agreement when producing descriptive texts. Existing studies, nevertheless, have often concentrated primarily on identifying and classifying errors, while providing less detailed qualitative evidence concerning the interlingual and intralingual factors underlying those errors. Research also remains limited within rural and private-school contexts in North Sumatra, where differences in learning resources and opportunities for English-language exposure may shape students' grammatical development. This study addresses these gaps through a multi-instrument investigation that extends error classification toward causal interpretation and employs methodological triangulation to strengthen the credibility of its findings.

Accordingly, this study addresses two research questions: (1) What types of grammatical errors, based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy, occur in descriptive texts written by tenth-grade students? and (2) What interlingual and intralingual factors contribute to the occurrence of these errors? The study specifically examines errors involving the simple present tense and categorizes them into omission, addition, misformation, and misordering while investigating the factors that contribute to their production. By integrating students' written data with evidence concerning the underlying causes of their errors, the research seeks to construct a comprehensive diagnostic profile of students' grammatical competence. This approach positions grammatical errors as evidence of developing interlanguage rather than merely as deficiencies in students' written products. The findings are expected to provide an empirical basis for English teachers to develop more targeted, contextualized, and pedagogically responsive grammar instruction.

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to systematically investigate grammatical errors in students' writing without manipulating the research setting or introducing experimental treatment. The researchers selected a qualitative approach to develop an in-depth understanding of the grammatical patterns underlying students' errors rather than to generate statistically generalizable findings. Sugiyono (2020) emphasizes that qualitative research provides an appropriate methodological orientation for examining phenomena within their natural contexts and generating rich, process-oriented interpretations. The study adopted *Error Analysis* as its principal analytical framework and employed the Surface Strategy Taxonomy discussed by Leinonen, Denny, et al. (2023) as the primary instrument for classifying students' grammatical errors. This framework enabled the researchers to systematically identify and interpret observable deviations in students' use of the simple present tense in descriptive texts.

The research was conducted at Muhammadiyah 8 Private Senior High School Kisaran, located at Jl. Sisingamangaraja No. 317, Kisaran Kota, Asahan Regency, North Sumatra. The researchers purposively selected this research site because preliminary classroom observations revealed recurring grammatical inaccuracies in students' productive writing. Data collection commenced on May 9, 2026, during the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The research population comprised 31 tenth-grade students enrolled at the school, from whom the researchers obtained 28 valid and complete writing samples for analysis. The researchers excluded incomplete responses and data from students who did not fully participate in the data-collection procedures to maintain the completeness and analytical consistency of the dataset.

The researchers employed three data-collection instruments to strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings through methodological triangulation. The primary instrument consisted of a controlled writing test in which students produced a descriptive text of approximately 100–150 words about a family member, classmate, or public figure within 30 minutes. During the test, the researchers prohibited students from using dictionaries or mobile devices and instructed them to indicate corrections by striking through errors rather than using correction fluid. These controlled

conditions allowed the researchers to capture students' relatively spontaneous and minimally assisted linguistic production, consistent with the elicitation principles outlined by Valeriani et al. (2022). The resulting written texts served as the primary dataset for identifying and classifying grammatical errors involving the simple present tense.

The researchers subsequently conducted semi-structured interviews with three purposively selected participants who demonstrated the highest frequencies of grammatical errors: Student 01, Student 18, and Student 24. A standardized interview guide directed the discussion toward potential sources of error, including interlingual transfer, overgeneralization, rule restrictedness, and fossilization. The researchers used these interviews to obtain more detailed explanations of the linguistic reasoning and learning experiences underlying the error patterns identified in the students' written texts. They also administered a 15-item multiple-choice digital questionnaire to all 28 participants through *Google Forms*. The questionnaire systematically documented students' self-reported cognitive and linguistic factors associated with their difficulties in applying the simple present tense.

Data analysis followed a sequential *Error Analysis* procedure consisting of error identification, description and classification, frequency calculation, and causal interpretation. First, the researchers identified grammatical errors involving the simple present tense in the 28 writing samples and subsequently classified them according to the Surface Strategy Taxonomy into four categories: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. They then calculated the frequency of each category to determine the most prevalent error patterns and interpreted their possible linguistic and cognitive causes by cross-referencing evidence from the writing samples, interview transcripts, and questionnaire responses. The researchers strengthened the trustworthiness of the analysis through methodological triangulation, member checking with interview participants, and persistent examination of the writing samples using the established analytical taxonomy. These procedures enabled the study to connect observable grammatical error patterns with the interlingual, intralingual, and cognitive factors underlying their occurrence.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Types of Grammatical Errors in Students' Descriptive Texts

The analysis of 28 descriptive texts written by tenth-grade students identified 149 grammatical errors across the four categories of the Surface Strategy Taxonomy. The researchers classified these errors into misformation, omission, misordering, and addition according to their observable structural characteristics. Misformation emerged as the most frequent error category, whereas addition occurred least frequently in the students' descriptive texts. This distribution indicates that students experienced greater difficulty selecting and applying appropriate grammatical forms than avoiding unnecessary linguistic elements. Table 1 presents the frequency and percentage of each error category.

**Table 1.** Frequency and Percentage of Error Types Based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy

| No. | Error Category | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) | No. | Error Category |
|-----|----------------|---------------|----------------|-----|----------------|
| 1   | Misformation   | 72            | 48.32%         | 1   | Misformation   |
| 2   | Omission       | 39            | 26.17%         | 2   | Omission       |
| 3   | Misordering    | 24            | 16.11%         | 3   | Misordering    |

Source: Primary Data Analysis (2026)

The distribution presented in Table 1 demonstrates that misformation accounted for almost half of all grammatical errors, with 72 occurrences (48.32%). Omission represented the second most frequent category, with 39 occurrences (26.17%), followed by misordering with 24 occurrences (16.11%). Addition constituted the least frequent category, accounting for 14 occurrences (9.40%). These results reveal that students primarily encountered difficulties in selecting appropriate grammatical forms and supplying obligatory grammatical elements. The distribution provides a diagnostic foundation for examining the specific manifestations of each error category and determining appropriate pedagogical priorities.

### Error Classification

The researchers further classified the identified errors according to individual student writing samples to determine how the four categories were distributed across participants. This student-level classification provides a more detailed representation of the grammatical difficulties found in the descriptive texts. The analysis shows considerable variation

among students, with some producing numerous errors across several categories while others demonstrated relatively few or no errors. Such variation indicates differences in students' control of the grammatical structures required for descriptive writing. The detailed distribution of errors is presented in the following classification table.

**Table 2.** Recapitulation of Students' Error Classification

| Student Code                       | Omission  | Addition  | Misformation | Misordering | Total Errors |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| Student 1                          | 2         | 3         | 5            | 3           | 13           |
| Student 2                          | 0         | 0         | 1            | 0           | 1            |
| Student 3                          | 0         | 1         | 4            | 1           | 6            |
| Student 4                          | 0         | 0         | 4            | 4           | 8            |
| Student 5                          | 0         | 0         | 0            | 0           | 0            |
| Student 6                          | 0         | 0         | 4            | 0           | 4            |
| Student 7                          | 3         | 1         | 4            | 0           | 8            |
| Student 9                          | 0         | 0         | 3            | 0           | 3            |
| Student 10                         | 3         | 0         | 1            | 2           | 6            |
| Student 11                         | 0         | 0         | 1            | 0           | 1            |
| Student 12                         | 1         | 0         | 1            | 0           | 2            |
| Student 13                         | 2         | 3         | 4            | 2           | 11           |
| Student 14                         | 2         | 0         | 1            | 3           | 6            |
| Student 15                         | 2         | 0         | 2            | 0           | 4            |
| Student 16                         | 3         | 0         | 3            | 0           | 6            |
| Student 17                         | 2         | 0         | 0            | 0           | 2            |
| Student 18                         | 4         | 2         | 5            | 2           | 13           |
| Student 19                         | 1         | 0         | 4            | 2           | 7            |
| Student 20                         | 1         | 1         | 3            | 1           | 6            |
| Student 21                         | 2         | 0         | 6            | 1           | 9            |
| Student 22                         | 0         | 0         | 1            | 1           | 2            |
| Student 23                         | 0         | 0         | 0            | 0           | 0            |
| Student 24                         | 3         | 2         | 7            | 0           | 12           |
| Student 25                         | 3         | 1         | 4            | 2           | 10           |
| Student 26                         | 0         | 0         | 4            | 0           | 4            |
| Student 27                         | 3         | 0         | 2            | 0           | 5            |
| Student 28                         | 2         | 0         | 2            | 0           | 4            |
| <b>Total reported in the study</b> | <b>39</b> | <b>14</b> | <b>72</b>    | <b>24</b>   | <b>149</b>   |

The aggregate analysis identified 149 grammatical errors across the students' descriptive texts. Misformation represented the dominant category with 72 occurrences (48.32%), followed by omission with 39 occurrences (26.17%), misordering with 24 occurrences (16.11%), and addition with 14 occurrences (9.40%). This hierarchy indicates that students experienced the greatest difficulty in producing the appropriate forms of required grammatical structures. The substantial proportion of omission errors also demonstrates incomplete control over obligatory English grammatical elements, particularly inflectional and copular forms. These findings provide a clear diagnostic basis for prioritizing instructional interventions according to the grammatical difficulties most frequently demonstrated by the students.

### **Misformation (48.32%)**

Misformation constituted the most prevalent error type, accounting for 72 occurrences or 48.32% of all identified errors. Sanders and de Bruin (2023) explain that misformation occurs when learners supply an incorrect form of a morpheme or grammatical structure even though their intended meaning may remain partially recoverable. The most prominent pattern in this study involved students' confusion between nominal and verbal constructions in the simple present tense, particularly the simultaneous use of the copula *to be* and a lexical verb, as illustrated by "She's have a warm tone" and "She is look very happy." Students also demonstrated recurrent subject-verb agreement difficulties by using base verb forms with third-person singular subjects, as in "she also always tell" instead of "she also always tells" and "he study" instead of "he studies." The researchers also identified inappropriate word-form and spelling selections, such as "imporlant" for "important," as manifestations of students' difficulty in producing accurate linguistic forms.

### **Omission (26.17%)**

Omission constituted the second most frequent category, with 39 occurrences representing 26.17% of the total errors. Students most frequently omitted the inflectional suffix *-s/-es* from verbs governed by third-person singular subjects, as illustrated by “her family go to riding” rather than the grammatically required inflected verb form. Another recurring pattern involved the omission of the copula *to be* from nominal descriptive constructions, producing incomplete clauses such as “my father [is] so kind” and “she [is] so diligent.” Students also omitted obligatory grammatical elements such as articles, as in “I have [a] best friend,” and lexical elements required in particular constructions, as in “She is 16 [years] old.” These patterns demonstrate that students had not yet consistently internalized several obligatory grammatical and lexical elements required to construct well-formed English sentences.

### **Misordering (16.11%)**

Misordering accounted for 24 occurrences, representing 16.11% of the identified grammatical errors. The dominant pattern reflected syntactic transfer from Indonesian, particularly when students mapped Indonesian noun–adjective ordering directly onto English structures that generally require adjectives to precede the nouns they modify. Examples such as “I have good a father” instead of “I have a good father” illustrate students’ difficulty arranging modifiers according to English syntactic conventions. Students also produced sentence-level ordering problems when attempting to construct more complex descriptive clauses, as illustrated by the fragmented expression “Daily they always I am so sweet.” These patterns suggest that students encountered increasing difficulty organizing grammatical constituents when their writing extended beyond relatively simple subject–predicate constructions.

### **Addition (9.40%)**

Addition represented the least frequent error category, with 14 occurrences accounting for 9.40% of the total errors. Although less frequent, these errors provide diagnostically important evidence of students’ tendency to overgeneralize grammatical forms that they had already encountered in English instruction. The most prominent pattern involved the unnecessary insertion of the copula *to be* in constructions containing lexical verbs, as illustrated by “He is a like sweet,” which suggests that students recognized the frequent occurrence of copular forms in English but had not fully mastered their grammatical distribution. Students also produced redundant repetitions of identical sentence structures, including consecutive occurrences of expressions such as “She is very kind,” as well as unnecessary prepositions or phrases that disrupted syntactic coherence. These findings indicate that addition errors resulted not simply from a lack of grammatical knowledge but also from incomplete control over when particular English grammatical elements should and should not occur.

### **Causes of Students’ Grammatical Errors**

Methodological triangulation across the controlled writing test, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaire data identified three interconnected mechanisms underlying students’ grammatical errors: interlingual interference, intralingual interference, and cognitive load. Interlingual interference emerged when students transferred linguistic patterns from Indonesian into English constructions, particularly in word order and sentence formation. Intralingual interference reflected incomplete mastery and overgeneralization of English grammatical rules, including the use of the copula *to be*, subject–verb agreement, and simple present tense structures. Cognitive demands during spontaneous writing further intensified these difficulties because students needed to simultaneously generate ideas, select vocabulary, organize information, and monitor grammatical accuracy. The interaction among these factors indicates that the identified errors represent systematic features of students’ developing interlanguage rather than isolated or random performance lapses.

### **Interlingual Interference (Mother-Tongue Transfer)**

Interlingual interference emerged as the most pervasive underlying factor contributing to students’ grammatical errors, particularly through the transfer of Indonesian structures into English. All three interview participants (Students 01, 18, and 24) explicitly reported that they frequently constructed English sentences by translating Indonesian expressions word for word. The questionnaire findings corroborated this pattern, as 57.14% of respondents attributed their omission of the *-s/-es* suffix to the uninflected Indonesian verb system, in which verb forms generally remain unchanged regardless of the grammatical subject. Indonesian noun–adjective ordering also contributed directly to

misordering in English noun phrases because students transferred their first-language syntactic patterns when organizing descriptive attributes. This finding corresponds with the linguistic interference perspective discussed by Leinonen, Hellas, et al. (2023), which explains that learners may transfer established structural patterns from their first language into the target language and consequently produce systematic errors when the two linguistic systems differ.

### Intralingual Interference (Target-Language Overgeneralization)

Intralingual interference also generated systematic errors as students overgeneralized partially acquired English grammatical rules. The interview with Student 01 revealed a persistent misconception that every English sentence requires the copula *is* to appear complete and grammatically acceptable, which contributed to frequent misformation involving the simultaneous occurrence of *to be* and lexical verbs. Questionnaire data reinforced this finding, with 57.14% of participants attributing their insertion of *is* before action verbs to excessive reliance on the *to be* patterns frequently encountered in descriptive writing. Rule restrictedness constituted another intralingual factor, as the interview evidence indicated that students possessed fragmented rather than systematic knowledge of subject–verb agreement. This incomplete grammatical development also appeared in the questionnaire results, where 67.86% of respondents reported unfamiliarity with the orthographic rule that changes a final consonant + *y* to *-ies* in third-person singular verbs, such as *study* → *studies*, indicating uneven mastery of morphological rules across linguistic contexts.

### Cognitive Load and Fossilization

The interaction between cognitive load and fossilized grammatical patterns constituted a third causal dimension of students' errors. The cognitive load perspective discussed by Nattinger (2014) suggests that learners possess limited working-memory resources; when students simultaneously generate content, retrieve vocabulary, organize generic structures, and monitor grammatical accuracy, their ability to attend to subtle morphological features may decline. Questionnaire results support this interpretation, as 57.14% of respondents reported that although they considered the simple present tense conceptually understandable, they found its rules considerably more difficult to apply during rapid writing production. A further 50% of participants reported proofreading their texts but remaining unable to recognize their own grammatical errors, suggesting that some inaccurate forms had become sufficiently entrenched within their developing interlanguage to resist independent self-correction. Student 18 provided additional evidence of this condition by reporting that revision would not necessarily help identify the errors, highlighting the need for explicit external feedback and guided error-awareness practices.

### Representative Error Analysis

The researchers examined representative sentences from the students' writing samples to demonstrate how the identified grammatical difficulties appeared in actual descriptive texts. These examples illustrate observable manifestations of misformation, omission, misordering, and addition within students' written production. Comparing the students' original constructions with their corrected forms also clarifies the linguistic mechanisms underlying each classification. The examples provide concrete evidence linking the quantitative distribution of errors to the qualitative analysis of students' grammatical competence. Table 2 presents selected representative examples according to the Surface Strategy Taxonomy.

**Table 3.** Representative Error Samples Based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy

| Error Type   | Incorrect Form                          | Correct Form                         | Description                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Misformation | <i>She's have a warm tone.</i>          | She has a warm tone.                 | Co-occurrence of the copula <i>to be</i> and a lexical verb, accompanied by incorrect subject–verb inflection ( <i>have</i> → <i>has</i> ). |
| Misformation | <i>He always make me happy.</i>         | He always makes me happy.            | Incorrect verb form for a third-person singular subject ( <i>make</i> → <i>makes</i> ).                                                     |
| Omission     | <i>Her family go to riding.</i>         | Her family goes riding.              | Omission of the <i>-es</i> inflection required for the third-person singular subject <i>family</i> .                                        |
| Omission     | <i>She is 16 old like me.</i>           | She is 16 years old like me.         | Omission of the obligatory noun <i>years</i> in the age expression.                                                                         |
| Misordering  | <i>I have good a father.</i>            | I have a good father.                | Incorrect article–adjective–noun ordering influenced by first-language syntactic patterns.                                                  |
| Misordering  | <i>Anilla Aza calls my love mother.</i> | I call my beloved mother Anilla Aza. | Literal translation resulting in inappropriate constituent ordering and an altered subject–verb–object structure.                           |

| Error Type | Incorrect Form                    | Correct Form        | Description                                                                                           |
|------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Addition   | <i>She is a housewife my mom.</i> | She is a housewife. | Redundant addition of <i>my mom</i> , resulting in a double-subject construction.                     |
| Addition   | <i>He is a like sweet.</i>        | He likes sweets.    | Superfluous insertion of the article <i>a</i> and inappropriate selection of the verbal construction. |

Source: Primary Data Analysis (2026)

The findings align with and extend previous research on grammatical error analysis in English as a Foreign Language contexts. The predominance of misformation errors (48.32%) supports patterns reported in comparable secondary-school studies, which identify form-related deviations as a persistent challenge in students’ use of the simple present tense (Mahdi et al., 2022). More specifically, the frequent confusion involving the copula *to be* and lexical verbs reveals a grammatical difficulty that extends beyond conventional subject–verb agreement problems. This pattern indicates that students have not yet developed a stable conceptual distinction between nominal and verbal sentence structures in English. Interview evidence strengthens this interpretation by showing that some students conceptualized *is* as a general marker of English sentence completeness rather than as a copula with a specific grammatical function (Laia, 2022; Yuniza et al., 2020).

The substantial evidence of interlingual interference is also consistent with the theoretical perspective presented by Fitriani et al. (2025), demonstrating how structural differences between Indonesian and English can contribute to systematic grammatical errors. Because Indonesian does not employ subject–verb agreement through comparable verbal inflection, students cannot directly transfer an equivalent first-language morphological pattern when learning the English *-s/-es* rule. Students therefore need to acquire and repeatedly practice this grammatical distinction as a feature of the target-language system rather than relying on structural analogy with Indonesian. These findings suggest that communicative practice alone may not adequately address persistent morphological errors when students have not yet developed explicit awareness of the relevant grammatical contrasts. English teachers can therefore complement communicative writing activities with explicit contrastive instruction that highlights structural differences between Indonesian and English, particularly in subject–verb agreement and morphological inflection (Berutu et al., 2024).

Evidence of fossilization represents a particularly important pedagogical finding because half of the participants reported proofreading their writing while remaining unable to recognize their own grammatical errors. This pattern suggests that repeated exposure to inaccurate forms may have strengthened students’ perception of those forms as acceptable within their developing interlanguage system. Conventional teacher correction after students submit their writing may therefore have limited effectiveness unless instruction also develops learners’ ability to recognize, explain, and independently revise recurring errors. Teachers can address this difficulty through structured self-correction and awareness-raising activities in which students examine their own errors, identify the violated grammatical rules, and produce corrected forms through guided reflection. Dawn’s (2011) Cognitive Process Theory of Writing further supports this pedagogical direction by emphasizing that learners need to develop revision strategies deliberately rather than treating revision as an automatic component of writing competence.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that tenth-grade students at Muhammadiyah 8 Private Senior High School Kisaran demonstrate systematic grammatical difficulties in using the simple present tense when writing descriptive texts. Analysis of 28 writing samples identified 149 errors, with misformation emerging as the most frequent category (48.32%), followed by omission (26.17%), misordering (16.11%), and addition (9.40%). Methodological triangulation of the writing tests, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaires revealed that these errors primarily originated from interlingual interference involving direct translation and structural transfer from Indonesian, intralingual interference involving overgeneralization of the copula *to be* and incomplete mastery of subject–verb agreement, and cognitive overload during writing production. Students’ inability to recognize recurring errors during proofreading further indicates that some inaccurate grammatical forms had become entrenched within their developing interlanguage. These findings demonstrate that students’ grammatical inaccuracies represent systematic patterns of interlanguage development rather than isolated performance lapses and highlight the need to address both first-language transfer and incomplete target-language rule acquisition in English writing instruction.

This study remains limited by its relatively small sample of 28 students from a single private senior high school, its focus exclusively on the simple present tense in descriptive texts, and its reliance on self-reported questionnaire and interview data to explain the underlying causes of grammatical errors. Future studies should therefore involve larger and more diverse student populations, examine multiple grammatical features and writing genres, and employ longitudinal or intervention-based designs to determine whether identified error patterns persist or decrease over time. Researchers should also investigate affective and motivational factors that may influence students' grammatical performance and engagement in writing activities. From a pedagogical perspective, English teachers should integrate explicit contrastive instruction that emphasizes structural differences between Indonesian and English, particularly in verb inflection, subject–verb agreement, and nominal and verbal sentence constructions. Teachers should complement this instruction with systematic error-awareness, guided proofreading, and structured self-correction activities to help students recognize recurring inaccuracies, strengthen grammatical monitoring, and gradually reduce entrenched error patterns in their written production.

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