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Ineffective Sentence Construction in Descriptive Texts: A Linguistic Analysis of Eighth-Grade Students at Ibnu Utsman Boarding School Tanjungpinang

Indah Purmasari[1], Sujinah[2]

[1,2] Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya

Corresponding Author: ipurmasari11@gmail.com, sujinah@um-surabaya.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the forms of ineffective sentence construction found in descriptive texts written by eighth-grade students at Ibnu Utsman Boarding School Tanjungpinang. The research employs a descriptive qualitative method using a linguistic analysis approach applied to 22 descriptive texts as the primary data source. The findings indicate that the most dominant errors occur at the phrase level, including the influence of local languages, incorrect use of prepositions, and word arrangements that do not conform to grammatical rules. In addition, syntactic errors at the sentence level were also identified, particularly sentences lacking subjects. The factors contributing to these errors include mother-tongue interference, limited use of standard Indonesian in daily communication, and the students' low interest in and limited practice of writing. These findings suggest the need for more structured writing instruction strategies, such as intensive practice, strengthening understanding of spelling conventions, and implementing contextual learning to enhance students' written language proficiency.

Keyword: Effective Sentences; Descriptive Text; Linguistic Analysis; Syntactic Errors; Boarding School Students.

INTRODUCTION

Language proficiency, particularly writing skills, is a fundamental competency that influences students' ability to express ideas coherently and logically (Satriawan, Padlurrahman, & Mohzana, 2023). Language, as a system of sound symbols, is used to convey thoughts,

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feelings, and intentions, making it highly strategic in educational processes (Haryanti, 2019). Writing, as an intellectual activity, requires structural accuracy, the ability to organize ideas, and mastery of syntactic rules, and it has long been recognized as the most challenging language skill for students to master (Prihantiwi & Naryatmojo, 2025).

One of the most essential components of writing is the ability to construct effective sentences clear, logical, concise, and easily understood by readers. Effective sentences demand structural coherence, precise diction, word economy, and logical relationships among components so that information in the text is conveyed accurately (Nurhayatin, Inggriyani, & Ahmad, 2018). In the context of descriptive writing, the use of effective sentences becomes even more crucial because this text type requires accuracy in depicting objects concretely. However, various studies have shown that many students and boarding school learners still make errors in using prepositions, forming phrases, and arranging subject predicate structures correctly (Wahyudin, 2023).

Initial observations at Ibnu Utsman Boarding School Tanjungpinang reveal that eighth grade students frequently use non-standard vocabulary, incorrect prepositions, and ineffective sentences in the descriptive texts they produce. These errors appear not only at the phrase level but also in sentence structure, such as the absence of subjects or the use of phrases that deviate from Indonesian grammatical norms. The causes of these errors are closely related to the influence of mother tongue or regional language, the limited use of standard Indonesian in daily communication, and insufficient interest and practice in writing. This phenomenon aligns with previous linguistic studies indicating that language errors are systematic and associated with limited mastery of syntactic rules (Amalia & Markhamah, 2021).

This study contains novelty because it examines ineffective sentence construction through an in depth linguistic analysis within the context of a boarding school, an educational environment that has rarely been the focus of research in the past five years. Furthermore, the study comprehensively maps types of syntactic errors, ranging from preposition misuse and regional language interference to incomplete sentence structures, all of which are highly relevant for developing learning materials in Islamic boarding schools. This research also specifically highlights how regional language interference significantly affects students' sentence structure an aspect seldom explored in recent literature.

The significance of this study lies in the urgent need to improve writing instruction quality in boarding school environments. Ineffective sentences not only hinder clarity in written communication but also impact students' critical thinking skills (Nurhayati, 2024). The findings

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of this research are expected to serve as a foundation for teachers to design more targeted writing instruction strategies, such as intensive practice, contextual diction-based learning, and project-based approaches that offer more meaningful writing experiences. Thus, this study provides theoretical contributions to the development of educational linguistics and practical contributions to improving the quality of Indonesian language learning in boarding schools.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach because it aims to provide an in depth description of the forms of ineffective sentences found in descriptive texts written by eighth grade students at Ibnu Utsman Boarding School Tanjungpinang (Nurhayati, 2025).. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to understand linguistic phenomena holistically through the analysis of words, sentence structures, and contextual language use. As emphasized by Moleong, qualitative research seeks to describe phenomena comprehensively using verbal data rather than numerical data (Moleong, 2022).

The subjects of this study were all 22 female eighth-grade students, making this research a population study. The primary data source consisted of 22 descriptive texts written by the students. Each text was analyzed to identify syntactic errors, including errors in phrases, preposition use, word order, and sentences lacking subjects. Additional data were obtained through observations within the boarding school environment and field notes that documented the students' linguistic behavior in daily communication (Helin, 2023).

Data collection was carried out through three procedures (Sugiyono, 2020). First, documentation was used to obtain copies of the descriptive texts as the main material for analysis. Second, observations were conducted to understand the linguistic context of the students, including their tendency to use regional languages, which is believed to influence syntactic errors. Third, field notes helped the researcher record phenomena that emerged during data collection, such as linguistic interactions and students' responses to writing instruction.

Data analysis was conducted continuously following the model of Miles and Huberman, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 2020). In the data reduction stage, the researcher identified, selected, and categorized sentences containing errors. The data display stage involved presenting the analysis in narrative and tabular form to highlight patterns of errors. Finally, the conclusion drawing stage summarized the most dominant types of errors and their contributing factors, including the

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influence of regional languages, limited use of standard Indonesian, and insufficient writing practice.

To ensure the validity of the findings, this study applied source triangulation by comparing data obtained from texts, observations, and field notes. In addition, peer review with language experts was conducted to verify the accuracy of error categorization (Arikunto, 2022). The study also adhered to research ethics by maintaining the confidentiality of the students' identities and securing permission from the school.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that eighth grade students at Ibnu Utsman Boarding School Tanjungpinang still make various syntactic errors in writing descriptive texts. These errors appear at both the phrase and sentence levels, particularly in the use of non standard words, incorrect prepositions, improper word order, and sentences lacking subjects. These findings demonstrate that the students' writing skills are not yet fully supported by adequate syntactic mastery, resulting in written messages that are not conveyed effectively.

Errors in the Phrase Level

Phrase level errors were found to be the most dominant in this study. These errors include the use of non standard words influenced by regional languages, such as cape, kecapean, pakayan, or kalo, which do not conform to standard Indonesian. In several cases, students used phrases that do not have accurate equivalents in standard Indonesian (Hapsari, Harahap, Bonde, & Cahya, 2021). This indicates strong interference from the mother tongue or regional language, as shown in the sentence kakak perempuan saya pingsan karena terlalu kecapean, which should be written as kelelahan. This phenomenon aligns with previous linguistic findings suggesting that language environments can significantly influence learners' syntactic construction, especially in bilingual regions (Fitriani & Utami, 2024).

Additionally, students frequently made errors in using the prepositions di and ke. These errors occurred because students often wrote these prepositions as a single unit when they should be written separately, such as disekolah, didepan, kerumah, or kesekolah, although the standard forms should be written separately when functioning as markers of place or direction. This indicates that students have a limited understanding of prepositions as part of Indonesian spelling conventions according to the Pedoman EYD (Khasanah, 2024). The study also identified incorrect preposition use for expressing time, such as dihari itu, which should be written as pada

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hari itu. These findings show that instruction on spelling and the function of conjunctions needs to be strengthened in writing activities.

Other phrase-level errors relate to improper word order in nominal or verbal phrases. Students tended to write phrases with unnecessary repetition or illogical word combinations, resulting in ineffective sentence structures. An example is the sentence ibu saya yang memanggil saya, which not only includes unnecessary repetition but is also syntactically inefficient. Such errors indicate that students lack strong language awareness in selecting concise, clear, and logical phrase structures.

Errors in the Sentence Level

In addition to phrase level issues, the study also found that several students wrote sentences without clear subjects or predicates. An example can be seen in the sentence Untuk memenuhi kebutuhan di dalam rumah (To fulfill the needs inside the house), which lacks a subject and therefore cannot be understood as a complete sentence. Such sentences fail to meet the basic S–P (Subject Predicate) structure required for effective sentence construction. This incompleteness prevents the intended message from being fully understood by the reader. The absence of subjects or predicates often occurs because students begin sentences with the preposition untuk ("to"), without considering the syntactic consequences. This condition demonstrates that students' understanding of basic sentence structure is still limited, so intensive training on fundamental patterns such as S–P, S–P–O, and S–P–O–K is needed in writing instruction (Mariyana, 2019).

A sentence must be constructed well and follow grammatical rules to avoid misunderstanding for readers or listeners. One of the impacts of foreign-language influence is errors in word order (Pramitasari, 2020). Based on the findings, several syntactic errors at the phrase level appear in the form of incorrect word arrangement in eighth grade students' descriptive texts at Ibnu Utsman Boarding School. The following data demonstrate these word-order errors, along with explanations and their corrected forms:

1. "Lalu Ibu saya yang memanggil saya untuk membuat kue tersebut supaya ibu saya yang bisa istirahat."

   There are two errors in the sentence above. First, the phrase ibu saya yang memanggil saya is ineffective and lacks communicative clarity because the word saya is repeated unnecessarily. The correct form is ibu memanggil saya, which is more concise and logical. The second error occurs in the phrase supaya ibu saya yang bisa istirahat, which contains unnecessary repetition of ibu saya and uses the colloquial expression bisa istirahat. This

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should be replaced with the pronoun ia and the formal expression dapat beristirahat. Therefore, the corrected sentence is: Ibu memanggil saya untuk membuat kue tersebut supaya ia dapat beristirahat. In standard grammar, subjects should not be repeated excessively, and the word yang should not be used unnecessarily because it disrupts clarity and fluency. A simplified corrected version is: Lalu ibu memanggil saya untuk membuat kue tersebut agar ia dapat beristirahat.

2. “Saat ini saya berada di kelas 3 SMP dan setiap harinya dihabiskannya dengan tiga sahabat akrab saya.”
   There are two errors in this sentence. The verb dihabiskannya should be replaced with dihabiskan to align with context and grammatical norms. Additionally, the phrase sahabat akrab is redundant because the word sahabat already implies closeness. Thus, the corrected form is: Saat ini saya berada di kelas 3 SMP dan setiap harinya dihabiskan dengan tiga sahabat saya.
3. “Kakakku dan aku pergi berliburan di rumah kakek dan nenek ketika kami liburan sekolah.”
   The word berliburan should be corrected to berlibur to follow standard grammar. The correct sentence is: Kakakku dan aku pergi berlibur di rumah kakek dan nenek ketika kami liburan sekolah.
4. “Pada pagi hari sekitar pukul 05:00 semua anak kost sudah bangun untuk mempersiapkan diri untuk kesekolah.”
   The sentence contains two unnecessary repetitions of the word untuk. Grammar guidelines recommend avoiding redundant words to maintain conciseness and clarity. The corrected sentence is: Pada pagi hari sekitar pukul 05:00 semua anak kost sudah bangun untuk mempersiapkan diri ke sekolah.
5. “Mereka juga selalu saling membantu dan saling menghargai satu sama lain.”
   The word saling is used twice in the same sentence. According to grammatical rules, the unnecessary repetition should be removed for clarity. The corrected form is: Mereka juga selalu membantu dan menghargai satu sama lain. From the data above, it can be concluded that several syntactic errors at the phrase level arise due to incorrect word arrangement. A total of five errors were identified in the word-order patterns produced by the students.

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Analysis of Factors Causing Errors

The findings of this study identified three main factors contributing to students' syntactic errors: interference from regional languages, limited use of standard Indonesian in daily communication, and low interest and insufficient practice in writing (Sartika, Suharta, & Astawa, 2024). Students tend to use their regional languages more frequently in informal conversations within the boarding school environment, causing lexical forms and syntactic structures from those languages to appear in their writing. This can be seen from their non standard word choices and sentence constructions that resemble spoken patterns typical of their local language.

The lack of consistent use of standard Indonesian in daily activities also results in students being unaccustomed to practicing sentence structures that follow correct Indonesian grammar. Moreover, low interest in writing means that students do not gain enough experience in constructing effective sentences. In fact, regular writing practice is an essential factor in developing syntactic skills and selecting appropriate vocabulary.

Based on the research data and observations conducted during the study, several factors led to the syntactic errors found in the descriptive texts written by eighth-grade students at Ibnu Utsman Boarding School. These factors include:

1. Influence of the Mother Tongue or Regional Language.
   Regional language is deeply rooted in each child and is reinforced by their environment, especially because the school is located in the middle of a village. In their interactions at school, students predominantly use the regional language. This situation strongly affects their learning process because students rarely use Indonesian, either in spoken or written form. As a result, regional language patterns are carried over into their writing.
2. Limited Use of Standard Indonesian in Communication.
   Eighth grade students at Ibnu Utsman Boarding School rarely use standard Indonesian when communicating with others; they only use it when speaking with teachers. This becomes an obstacle in the learning process, especially in writing descriptive texts or stories. In fact, practicing communication using proper Indonesian helps enrich vocabulary and improve overall language skills, which directly influences writing ability.
3. Low Student Interest in Writing Compositions.
   During the research activities, the researcher observed limited student engagement in writing tasks. Writing activities are important because they help students practice using standard Indonesian accurately. Regular writing not only improves language skills but also increases students' familiarity and comfort with using proper written Indonesian.

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The lack of writing practice, therefore, contributes significantly to the syntactic errors found in their texts.

Discussion of Findings Based on Linguistic Theory

The findings of this study support error analysis theory, which states that language errors are systematic and reflect learners' language acquisition processes. The predominance of phrase level errors indicates that the students have not yet internalized correct syntactic structures, particularly in terms of word choice, preposition usage, and the construction of both verbal and nominal phrases. Furthermore, the findings of this study align with previous literature emphasizing that mother-tongue interference is one of the major factors contributing to syntactic errors in students' writing.

From the perspective of Indonesian language instruction, these findings highlight the need for writing pedagogy to be continuous and grounded in error based teaching, enabling students to recognize their own error patterns and correct them effectively. Contextual learning, intensive practice, and strengthened instruction in spelling and the use of standard Indonesian should become essential components of teaching strategies in boarding school settings.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that eighth grade students at Ibnu Utsman Boarding School Tanjungpinang continue to face various challenges in applying effective sentence construction when writing descriptive texts. Most of the errors identified relate to the use of phrases and sentence structures that do not comply with Indonesian grammatical rules. At the phrase level, students frequently used non-standard words such as cape, kecapean, and kalo, which demonstrates strong interference from regional languages. The use of such non standard vocabulary indicates that daily communication habits in the local language greatly influence their written language construction. This finding aligns with Yendra's view that linguistic environments play a significant role in shaping a person's language performance. Furthermore, errors involving the use of prepositions such as "di" and "ke" were also highly dominant. Many students wrote these prepositions as a single unit in contexts where they should be written separately, such as disekolah or kesekolah, revealing weak understanding of the difference between prepositions and affixes in Indonesian. These errors obscure the clarity of information in the sentence and fail to meet the basic principles of effective sentences that require clear relationships between components.

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Other errors at the phrase level appear in improper word order and excessive use of words, such as subject repetition or redundant phrases. Students tend to construct sentences based on spoken language patterns, resulting in structures that are neither concise nor logical. However, descriptive text writing requires precise diction and appropriate sentence structure so that the objects being described can be understood clearly. These findings support previous arguments stating that sentence effectiveness depends on coherence and logical arrangement of words.

At the sentence level, the study found numerous examples of sentences lacking subjects or predicates, such as Untuk memenuhi kebutuhan di dalam rumah, which cannot be interpreted as a complete sentence. The absence of these essential elements indicates that students have not yet grasped the basic concept of sentence structure as a grammatical unit that must contain at least a subject and a predicate. Such errors render the sentence unable to convey complete information, thereby reducing the clarity of the descriptive text. This aligns with Wahyudin's assertion that inaccuracies in syntactic structure can hinder meaning delivery in students' writing.

Further analysis shows that the errors committed by students are influenced by three main factors: interference from regional languages, limited use of standard Indonesian in daily communication, and low interest and limited experience in writing. Regional language interference causes students to rely on spoken language patterns that deviate from formal written standards. Meanwhile, minimal use of standard Indonesian in the boarding school environment prevents them from gaining sufficient exposure to correct sentence structures. A lack of writing practice also weakens their ability to identify and correct errors.

Overall, this discussion demonstrates that the syntactic errors made by students are systematic and recurring, indicating the need for more targeted writing instruction strategies. Teachers should provide intensive exercises focused on identifying and correcting errors, strengthen students' understanding of spelling and phrase structures, and encourage the use of standard Indonesian in daily life. Project-based and contextual learning approaches can also enhance students' language awareness while offering more meaningful writing experiences. Thus, efforts to improve the quality of Indonesian language learning particularly in writing must prioritize strengthening syntactic competence and cultivating consistent use of correct Indonesian in the boarding school environment.

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CONCLUSION

This study shows that eighth grade students at Ibnu Utsman Boarding School Tanjungpinang continue to face various challenges in using effective sentences when writing descriptive texts. The most dominant errors were found at the phrase level, particularly in the use of non standard words, incorrect prepositions, and word arrangements that do not follow Indonesian grammatical rules. In addition, sentence-level errors were also identified, such as the use of sentences without clear subjects or predicates, resulting in incomplete information and difficulty in comprehension. These findings indicate that the students' syntactic awareness still needs to be improved systematically. The main factors contributing to these errors include regional language interference, limited use of standard Indonesian in daily interactions, and the students' low interest and limited experience in writing. Therefore, improving writing instruction strategies becomes crucial to enhance the overall written language proficiency of the students.

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