# An Analysis of Personal Pronoun Errors in Descriptive Text Written by Students of Vocational High School

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| Article Info | ABSTRACT |
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Mastering grammar remains a significant challenge for students, particularly in writing skills. This study investigates students' difficulties in using personal pronouns accurately in writing descriptive texts in English, as incorrect pronoun usage can reduce clarity and coherence in written communication. Although personal pronouns are fundamental components of English grammar, many students still struggle to apply them appropriately in actual writing contexts, indicating a gap between grammatical knowledge and practical use. This research aims to identify the types of personal pronouns used and analyze the errors made by tenth grade students at SMKN 2 Kabupaten Tangerang. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, applying error analysis based on Betty Schrampfer Azar's (1998) classification of personal pronouns and Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982) surface strategy taxonomy. Data were collected from 43 students' descriptive texts and analyzed to determine patterns of errors. The findings show that subject pronouns were used most frequently (66%), followed by possessive adjectives (26%) and object pronouns (8%), while possessive and reflexive pronouns were not used. The most dominant error type was misformation, indicating students' difficulty in selecting appropriate pronoun forms based on grammatical function and sentence context. These findings suggest the need for more focused instruction and practice on pronoun usage to improve students' grammatical accuracy in writing.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education in Indonesia, mastering grammar remains a significant challenge for students, particularly in writing skills. One crucial aspect of grammar is the use of personal pronouns. Personal pronouns function as substitutes for nouns to avoid repetition and maintain coherence in written texts (Azar, 1998). However, many students still struggle to use these pronouns accurately, especially when writing descriptive texts that require consistent subject references (Nokas, 2021; Sari, 2020).

Descriptive text is one of the core writing genres taught in the tenth-grade curriculum in Indonesia. This genre encourages students to describe people, places, or objects in detail using proper grammatical structures (Fitriani et al., 2019). Nevertheless, numerous studies have shown that errors in the use of personal pronouns frequently occur and affect the clarity of students' writing (Ummah, 2019; Wulandari et al., 2023). These issues are often attributed to limited exposure to English outside the classroom and a lack of instructional focus on this aspect in writing lessons.

Previous studies have shown that misformation is the most dominant error type, indicating that students have difficulty selecting the appropriate pronoun form according to grammatical function (Anggraeni, 2019; Sultoni Hakidi, Suparmi, 2021). For example, research by Jiamwattanapong (2024), on Thai university students found that 66.66% of pronoun errors were misformation. Similar findings have also been observed in the Indonesian context, where misformation and omission are the most common errors in students' descriptive texts.

This study is based on two key theoretical frameworks: the classification of personal pronouns by Azar (1998), which includes subject pronouns, object pronouns, possessive adjectives, possessive pronouns, and reflexive pronouns, and the Surface Strategy Taxonomy by (Heidi Dulay, Marina K. Burt, 1982), which categorizes errors into omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. These frameworks provide a systematic basis for analyzing grammatical accuracy in student writing.

Based on the results of previous studies, this study was conducted with a broader scope, involving 43 tenth-grade students at SMKN 2 Tangerang Regency. The focus of this research is to examine how often, what types, and what forms of errors in the use of personal pronouns occur in the descriptive texts they write. The state of the art of this research lies in an in-depth analysis of the patterns of use and errors of personal pronouns, which is based on two main theories. Through this approach, this research can provide a better understanding for teachers in teaching grammar to students. The hypothesis of this study is Students tend to use subject pronouns more frequently than other types of personal pronouns, and the most dominant error is misformation due to insufficient grammatical understanding.

Therefore, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) What types of personal pronouns are commonly used by tenth grade students in writing descriptive texts? (2) What types of errors are made by the students in using personal pronouns in writing descriptive text?.

## 2. METHOD
### 2.1. Research Design
Additionally, this study refers to Betty Schrampfer Azar's (1998) theory of personal pronouns, which divides personal pronouns into five categories: subject pronoun, object pronoun, possessive adjective, possessive pronoun, and reflexive pronoun. This study also applies Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982) Surface Strategy taxonomy to classify errors into four types: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering.

### 2.2. Data and Data Sources

The data sources for this study were obtained from 43 descriptive texts written by 10th grade students at SMKN 2 Kabupaten Tangerang. All of these texts were written by students in the 10th grade TITL 1 class. In a qualitative approach, data collection was conducted through a test method, and data sources were selected using the purposive sampling technique. This technique was carried out deliberately by considering the suitability of the subjects to the research objectives. Sulistiyowati (2017), states that purposive sampling is a sampling method based on certain criteria or considerations relevant to the focus of the study. In the context of this study, the selected students were those in Grade X who had participated in learning activities and completed assignments related to the topic of personal pronouns.

### 2.3. Data Collection

The researcher collected qualitative data in this study through a written test as the main instrument. This test was designed to explore students' ability to use personal pronouns in descriptive writing. The test instrument was developed based on a literature review and adapted to the language competencies of 10th-grade students, and validated by two experts in terms of content, construction, and language.

The written test consisted of one open ended writing task in which students were asked to write a descriptive text of at least 80 words on the topic of "describing someone," such as a family member, friend, or idol. This topic was chosen to encourage the use of various types of personal pronouns (subject, object, possessive adjective, possessive

pronoun, and reflexive pronoun) in a natural context.

Before the test was administered, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and the procedures to the students. The test was conducted during one class session without the use of electronic devices. All student writings were collected and analyzed qualitatively to identify types of errors in the use of personal pronouns. The written documents were then scanned and archived for further analysis.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study was conducted qualitatively using a content analysis approach, which aimed to explore and understand errors in the use of personal pronouns in descriptive texts written by students. The researcher followed the analysis model proposed by Matthew B. Miles, A. michael Huberman (1994), which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

In the first stage, data reduction, the researcher selected relevant sections of the students' writings that aligned with the research focus, namely the use of personal pronouns. The selected data were then analyzed to identify the forms of errors that emerged and grouped into four categories of errors based on the theory of Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982), namely omission, addition, misformation, and misordering.

The next stage is data presentation, where the findings are systematically organized in the form of tables and descriptive narratives. This aims to show the frequency and patterns of errors that occur in students' writing. The entire analysis process is done manually to ensure accuracy in

identifying and classifying each type of error found..

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
### 3.1. Findings

This study aims to identify the types of personal pronouns used by tenth-grade students at SMKN 2 Tangerang Regency in writing descriptive texts and to analyze the types of errors that arise in their use. The findings are presented in two main aspects: (1) the types and frequency of personal pronoun usage, and (2) the types of errors based on the surface strategy taxonomy of Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982).

### 3.1. 1 Types and Frequency of Personal Pronoun Usage

Analysis of 43 descriptive texts by students revealed that the most frequently used type of personal pronoun was the subject pronoun, occurring 392 times (66%). Possessive adjectives were used 153 times (26%), and object pronouns were used 46 times (8%). Meanwhile, possessive pronouns and reflexive pronouns were not found in the students' texts.

The following table shows the distribution of personal pronoun usage by students:

*Tabel 1 Frequency of Use of Personal Pronouns*

| No | Type of Personal Pronoun | Frequency | Percentage |
|----|--------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1 | Subject Pronoun | 392 | 66% |
| 2 | Object Pronoun | 46 | 8% |
| 3 | Possessive Adjective | 153 | 26% |
| 4 | Possessive Pronoun | 0 | 0% |
| 5 | Reflexive Pronoun | 0 | 0% |
| **Total: 591** | | | |

The use of subject pronouns dominated with 66%, indicating that students are more familiar with this form because it is often used in basic sentence structures. This finding is in line with research conducted by Holandyah et al. (2018), which shows that students still experience difficulties in using various forms of personal pronouns in descriptive texts. In that study, it was found that students tended to use the pronoun forms they were most familiar with, such as "he" or "she," while other forms were rarely used.

Possessive adjectives were used 26% of the time, which means that some students sufficiently understood possessive forms such as "my" or "his" when describing subjects. Putri & , Hasnawati Latief (2022), who stated

that students find it easier to use forms such as "my" and "his" because they are more commonly encountered in writing practice and everyday conversation.

Object pronouns only appeared 8% of the time, indicating that students still had difficulty distinguishing between subjects and objects in sentences, this is in line with the results of research conducted by Kahfi et al. (2024), which revealed that students tend to only use personal pronoun forms that are familiar to them. Therefore, a more comprehensive understanding is needed to enable students to use object pronouns appropriately and diversely in descriptive writing.

Meanwhile, possessive pronouns were not found at all, indicating that students do not yet understand or are

not yet accustomed to using these two forms in their writing. These findings indicate that students tend to be familiar only with subject pronouns and possessive adjectives, while the use of object pronouns is still limited, and possessive pronouns and reflexive pronouns are not found at all. This is supported by Nursahadah (2014), who states that students generally only know possessive adjectives and have difficulty distinguishing the functions of possessive pronouns, so these forms do not appear in their writing.

Reflexive pronouns the absence of reflexive pronoun usage also indicates that students have not yet understood their function, consistent with Siska (2024), findings, which reported that students do not use reflexive pronouns in their narrative writing.

### 3.1.2 Types of Personal Pronoun Usage Errors

Personal pronoun usage errors were analyzed using the classification developed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982), which includes four types of errors: misformation, omission, addition, and misordering. Of all the errors found, misformation was the most dominant, with a frequency of 62%.

The following is a breakdown of the types of errors in the use of personal pronouns by students.

*Tabel 2 Frequency Types of Error*

| No | Types of Error | Frequency | Example | Percentage |
|----|----------------|-----------|---------|------------|
| 1 | Omission | 75 | And Ø lives in cilongok <br> He | 28% |
| 2 | Addition | 20 | She is school in her SMKN 2 Kabupaten Tangerang | 8% |
| 3 | Misformation | 154 | He is hobby playing badminton <br> His | 58% |
| 4 | Misordering | 18 | Nick his name <br> His nickname | 7% |
| **Total: 269** | | | | |

Misformation errors indicate that many students are not yet able to choose the correct personal pronoun form according to the context. This finding is in line with research conducted by Sultoni Hakidi, Suparmi (2021), finding that misformation is the most dominant type of error in the use of personal pronouns in students' descriptive texts. This shows that many students do not understand the difference between subject (he), object (him), and possessive (his) pronouns.

Omission errors describe students' negligence in writing the required pronoun, which can cause the meaning of the sentence to become unclear. This finding is in line with Huan (2022), which analyzed the thesis proposals of final semester students of English Study Program at Nusa Cendana University. In her research, Huan found that omission error was the most dominant type of error. Students tend to omit the use of personal pronouns.

Addition occurs when students add unnecessary pronouns, This finding is supported by Ramayanti et al. (2023), research, which revealed that students often make addition errors by placing elements that should not be in the sentence. This kind of error is usually caused by a low understanding of grammatical structures in English.

While misordering indicates errors in word order. Although the study by Pratiwi et al. (2019), did not find misordering errors, they emphasized the importance of mastering the order and function of words in sentences to produce writing that is in accordance with English rules. This indicates that the understanding of syntactic order needs to be continuously improved so that similar errors can be minimized.

### 3.2. Discussion

This study refers to Azar's (1998) grammar theory in analyzing the forms of personal pronouns used by students, and uses Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982) surface strategy taxonomy to identify the types of errors in their use. From the analysis of 43 students in class X TITL 1 at SMKN 2 Tangerang Regency, a picture emerged of the trends in usage and patterns of errors made by students in writing descriptive texts using personal pronouns.

### 3.2.1 Use of Personal Pronouns

Students used almost all types of personal pronouns, except for reflexive pronouns. The details are as follows:

1. Subject pronouns : 392 times (66%)
2. Object pronouns : 46 times (8%)
3. Possessive adjectives : 153 times (26%)
4. No use of possessive or reflexive pronouns

The high frequency of subject pronoun usage reflects that students have understood the basic sentence structure in English. The use of possessive adjectives is also quite prominent, indicating the ability to express ownership. Meanwhile, the object pronoun form is still rarely used, and the absence of the other two forms indicates limited understanding or insufficient delivery of the material in class.

### 3.2.2 Types of Errors

The types of errors found based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy include:

1. Misformation : 154 times (58%)
2. Omission : 75 times (28%)
3. Addition : 20 times (8%)
4. Misordering : 18 times (7%)

Misformation is the most dominant error, indicating students' inaccuracy in choosing pronoun forms according to sentence function. Omission errors reflect students' lack of awareness in including important elements. Misordering occurs due to errors in word order, often due to the influence of the first language structure. Meanwhile, addition is the error with the lowest frequency, indicating the addition of unnecessary grammatical elements.

### 3.2.3 Comparison with Previous Research

The results of this study are in line with Anggraeni (2019), study, which also found that misformation was the most common type of error. However, in this study, omission errors were more common than addition errors, which is different from the order in the previous study. In addition, this study presents more detailed data regarding the frequency of use of various types of personal pronouns.

A study by Sultoni Hakidi, Suparmi (2021), also shows the dominance of misformation errors, reinforcing that this form is common among vocational high school students. The advantage of this study lies in the larger number of participants and a

more complete description of the forms of pronouns used.

Similarly, Jiamwattanapong (2024), research in Thailand shows a similar pattern, namely the dominance of misformation errors, although the context is different. However, that study does not specify in detail the forms of personal pronouns used by students, unlike this study, which presents complete data on usage and errors.

Overall, this study not only maps the types of errors that occur but also shows the usage patterns of each form of personal pronoun. This provides a deeper contribution to efforts to enhance students' understanding of grammar, particularly in the context of writing descriptive texts.

## 4. CONCLUSION

This study provides a clear understanding of the use of personal pronouns by tenth-grade students at SMKN 2 Kabupaten Tangerang in writing descriptive texts. The analysis results indicate that only three types of personal pronouns are used by the students: subject pronouns, possessive adjectives, and object pronouns. Possessive pronouns and reflexive pronouns were not found at all. This suggests that the students have not fully grasped the functions of all forms of personal pronouns, possibly due to insufficient exposure to the material or incomplete instruction.

In addition to usage patterns, this study also identified four types of errors based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy, namely misformation, omission, addition, and misordering. Among these four types, misformation was the most common error, indicating that many students still struggle to select and use the appropriate pronoun form according to context. These errors reflect a lack of grammatical understanding and insufficient focused writing practice.

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