

Surface Strategy Taxonomy of Language Errors in Students' Observation Report Texts

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Abstract

This study analyzes language errors within the surface strategy taxonomy found in observation report texts written by tenth-grade students of class X.2 at SMAN 6 Tambun Selatan. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the data were collected from writing assignments completed by 32 students as representative samples. The focus of this study is to identify four types of errors based on Tarigan's theory (2021): omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The results of the analysis reveal a total of 26 identified errors. These findings consist of 8 omission errors, 12 addition errors, 3 misformation errors, and 3 misordering errors. The most dominant type of error is addition, with 12 instances. This indicates that students tend to use words excessively or redundantly, which results in sentences that are less coherent and less efficient. Overall, this study describes how students' limited understanding of linguistic rules affects the quality of their factual writing in composing observation reports.

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INTRODUCTION

Writing skills are essential for students because they enable individuals to measure their ability to express ideas clearly through written composition (Wiratama et al., 2022). These skills involve applying correct grammar, organizing ideas coherently, and selecting appropriate vocabulary so that messages can be conveyed effectively to readers (Siagian et al., 2024). Writing is often considered one of the most difficult language skills since it requires complex processes such as developing ideas, imagination, and perspectives into structured text (Hendrawan & Indihadi, 2019). Therefore, mastering writing demands continuous practice, structured instruction, and sustained effort over time (Tarigan, 2021a). This is very important.

Understanding context, purpose, audience, and text structure is a fundamental requirement in writing compositions. These elements serve as the foundation for conducting accurate analysis of grammar, spelling, and word choice according to the conventions of specific text types. Lestari & Soniatin (2023) emphasize that writing activities must consider linguistic rules that regulate spelling, vocabulary, and sentence organization to ensure clarity and coherence. When students understand these aspects, their writing becomes more systematic and meaningful. Consequently, the level of students' writing skills is closely related to the number of language errors they produce, where higher proficiency leads to fewer errors.

Language errors are a natural phenomenon in the learning process experienced by students at various educational levels, including schools and universities. These errors generally occur due to limited competence and improper application of language rules (Robiatul Adawiyah, 2023). Language errors refer to the use of incorrect words, phrases, or sentence structures caused by insufficient mastery of the target language. Nisa et al., (2019) explain that such errors often arise from first language interference, weak understanding of grammar, and ineffective learning processes. As a result, students frequently produce inaccurate sentence

constructions in their compositions unintentionally.

Tarigan (2021) defines language errors as deviations that indicate deficiencies in students' spoken or written language performance. Similarly, Siregar (2021) states that language errors are systematic deviations from standard linguistic norms that reflect a learner's level of competence. These errors often originate from habitual patterns in writing that are difficult to change (Abella et al., 2024). Writing obstacles, such as unnecessary additions or missing elements, can reveal underlying issues in language mastery. Therefore, identifying recurring errors is essential to improve teaching strategies and develop more effective and targeted language instruction for students.

One widely used framework for analyzing language errors is the surface strategy taxonomy proposed by (Tarigan, 2021). This taxonomy categorizes errors into four main types: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. This approach focuses on how surface structures of language are altered during the learning process. It highlights the ways learners modify, omit, or incorrectly arrange elements in sentences. By using this framework, educators can systematically identify patterns of errors and understand how students construct language. This analysis provides valuable insights into learners' difficulties and helps guide more effective teaching interventions.

Omission errors occur when necessary elements are missing from a sentence or phrase. According to Tarigan (2021), these errors are characterized by the absence of components that should be present according to standard grammar rules. Rusminto (2022) also explains that omission leads to incomplete or unclear sentences, making communication less effective. Such errors can confuse readers because essential information is not fully conveyed. Students often omit grammatical markers or important words due to lack of awareness or understanding. As a result, omission errors significantly affect the clarity and completeness of written compositions.

Addition errors refer to the presence of unnecessary elements in a sentence. Tarigan

(2021) explains that these errors occur when learners include words or structures that are not required in correct language use. These errors often appear during later stages of language learning when students overgeneralize rules. Addition errors can make sentences longer, inefficient, and harder to understand. Tarigan (2021) further classifies addition errors into three types: double marking, regularization, and simple addition. These errors indicate that students are still struggling to apply language rules accurately and consistently in their writing.

Misformation errors occur when students use incorrect forms of morphemes or structures. Tarigan (2021) states that in this type of error, learners produce forms that are entirely wrong rather than simply omitting or adding elements. Rusminto (2022) explains that misformation reflects misunderstanding of grammatical rules. This category includes regularization errors, archi-forms, and alternating forms. Such errors demonstrate that students attempt to apply rules but fail to do so correctly. As a result, sentences may appear grammatically incorrect and confusing. Misformation errors highlight the need for deeper understanding of language structures.

Misordering errors involve incorrect placement of words or morphemes in a sentence. Tarigan (2021) describes these errors as deviations in the arrangement of language elements, which result in unnatural or incorrect sentence structures. These errors frequently occur in both first and second language learning. Misordering is especially common in constructing questions or complex sentences. When words are placed incorrectly, the meaning of the sentence can become unclear or misleading. Therefore, proper understanding of sentence structure is crucial to avoid misordering errors and ensure clarity in communication.

Language errors are commonly found in various types of student writing, including observation report texts. These texts are important in Indonesian language learning because they train students to conduct simple research and present findings systematically (Fitri & Nani Solihati, 2023). Observation reports help

students develop analytical thinking, critical reasoning, and communication skills.

According to Kosasih (2014), observation report texts present factual information obtained through direct observation. Hotimah (2022) adds that these texts describe general characteristics and provide objective explanations. The construction of observation report texts integrates direct field observations (visual) and oral explanations (audio), which are critically synthesized into a systematic, objective, and factual written format. This active engagement facilitates a more immersive and optimal learning process for students (Ketut Ambarawati, 2020). Consequently, observation reports serve as a medium for presenting objective data derived from empirical evidence. Through systematic data processing, these texts provide readers with verifiable information, strictly distinguishing factual reporting from subjective imagination or opinion.

Observation report texts aim to describe objects or phenomena objectively without including personal opinions (Prambana et al., 2020). Explain that these texts present structured information based on observation results. The objects can include humans, animals, plants, objects, or events (Sarita & Imawati, 2022). Aulia & Gumilar (2021) state that the structure of observation reports consists of general classification, description of parts, and conclusion. Additionally, Tri Sudrajat & Firmansyah (2020) highlight that these texts must be objective, factual, specific, complete, and easy to understand. These characteristics ensure that the information presented is reliable and meaningful for readers.

Building upon these previous studies, the current research specifically examines the surface strategy taxonomy in the context of written observation reports by 10th-grade students. While Siregar (2021) focused on oral speech in media and Aswara et al., (2020) identified a high frequency of addition and spelling errors, this study provides a detailed descriptive analysis of 26 identified linguistic errors at SMA Negeri 6 Tambun Selatan. This comparison aims to highlight whether the patterns of omission,

addition, misformation, and misordering in student academic writing differ significantly from the errors found in broader linguistic contexts.

This research aims to identify and describe surface strategy errors comprising omission, addition, misformation, and misordering in the observation reports of 10th-grade students at SMAN 6 Tambun Selatan. This study adopts the error analysis framework established by Tarigan (2021), which centers on the surface strategy taxonomy. This approach prioritizes the analysis of manifest deviations within sentence structures. According to this taxonomy, linguistic errors are observable through the way speakers or writers modify, omit, add, or rearrange linguistic elements, resulting in structures that deviate from standard forms. The analysis is closely linked to Indonesian language pedagogy, where students are expected to achieve both comprehension and the ability to construct sentences that adhere to correct Indonesian surface writing standards.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method to produce findings that do not rely on statistical procedures (Sidiq & Choiri, 2019). The data generated are qualitative in nature and are presented descriptively by relying on sentence-based analysis. This study refers to Tarigan's (2021) surface strategy taxonomy theory as a theoretical framework to identify, classify, and interpret language error phenomena (omission, addition, misformation, and misordering) as well as the factors causing them in students' observation report texts.

This study also applies the procedures of descriptive qualitative research, which include the processes of data collection, processing, and interpretation of language data. The data collection techniques and procedures were carried out using an instrument in the form of a task requiring students to write observation report texts by students of class X.2 at SMAN 6 Tambun Selatan. The research data sources consist of 32 students selected from class X.2 as representatives. The research data consist of language errors in observation report texts, which

are analyzed using the stages of language error analysis according to Tarigan (2021), namely (1) selecting texts as the object of study, (2) identifying language errors, (3) classifying errors based on their types, (4) explaining the causes of the errors, and (5) evaluating the errors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on the research findings, the presentation of results regarding surface strategy taxonomy errors in the observation report texts of students in class X.2 of SMA Negeri 6 Tambun Selatan is summarized in the following table.

Based on the research data, four categories of surface strategy taxonomy errors were identified in the reports of students from X.2 at SMA Negeri 6 Tambun Selatan, with addition errors as the most dominant type.

Discussion

The observation reports of students from X.2 at SMA Negeri 6 Tambun Selatan indicate a high occurrence of surface strategy taxonomy errors, particularly omission and addition. This phenomenon is an implication of unintentional mistakes in the process of writing observation reports.

In accordance with the theory of Tarigan (2021), surface strategy taxonomy errors exclusively focus on changes or deviations in the surface structure of language writing.

Based on the research results obtained, there are language errors in the surface strategy taxonomy in the observation activity reports prepared by students of grade X.2 at SMA Negeri 6 Tambun Selatan in the form of.

Omission Errors

This type of error is marked by the absence of essential elements that reduce clarity of meaning. In line with Ibrizah (2020), omission errors refer to the absence of word elements that should appear in a sentence.

Data 1

In a student observation report titled "D'Topeng," in the sentence,

"However, D'Topeng does not only contain masks, but also features exhibitions of traditional objects and can be classified five types based on their production, namely those made of wood, stone, metal, fabric, and ceramics." (General statement; sentence 3)

This indicates the presence of an omission error. The student should have added the word "into" after "classified" and the word "materials" after "production" so that the sentence becomes clearer in meaning and grammatically correct. Therefore, it can be revised as follows: "However, D'Topeng does not only contain masks, but also features exhibitions of traditional objects and can be classified into five types based on the materials used in their production, namely wood, stone, metal, fabric, and ceramics."

Data 2

Another omission error in the student observation report titled "D'Topeng" appears in the sentence,

"Wooden masks Jakarta and West Java." (Part description; sentence 3)

This indicates the presence of an omission error. The student should have inserted the phrase "originate from" to form a complete sentence that clearly conveys information in accordance with proper rules, such as "Wooden masks originate from Jakarta and West Java."

Data 3

In the student observation report titled "D'Topeng," in the sentence,

"These items can be classified two types based on their materials ceramic and metal examples made of ceramic, ancient jars and made of metal such as jinggaran coins (Gowa Kingdom), VOC coins, and antique chairs." (Part description; sentence 8)

This indicates the presence of an omission error. The word "into" should appear after "classified," the conjunction "namely" should be added after "based on their materials" to clarify the sentence, and the word "such as" should be added before "ancient jars." The revised sentence

would be: "These items can be classified into two types based on their materials, namely ceramic and metal; examples of ceramic items include ancient jars, while metal items include jinggaran coins (Gowa Kingdom), VOC coins, and antique chairs."

Data 4

In the student observation report titled "Taman Kota Asri," in the sentence,

"In general, the park area appears quite clean, there is trash scattered in several spots." (Part description; sentence 2)

This indicates the presence of an omission error. The student should have added the word "bins" after "trash" to make the sentence clearer, so the complete sentence becomes: "In general, the park area appears quite clean, there are trash bins scattered in several spots."

Data 5

In a student observation report titled "School Environment," in the sentence,

"The field can also be used as a sports facility for grades 10, 11, and 12, for other event purposes." (Benefit description; sentence 2)

There is an omission error. The word "students" should appear before "grades 10, 11, and 12," and the word "as well as" should be added after "grades 10, 11, and 12" to make the sentence complete and clear. Therefore, the corrected sentence is: "The field can also be used as a sports facility for students in grades 10, 11, and 12 as well as for other event purposes."

Data 6

Another omission error appears in a student observation report titled "Neighborhood RT 03 Kelurahan Pengasinan," in the sentence,

"Maintaining residents' health by minimizing the risk of disease due to" (Benefit description; sentence 1)

This omission error is marked by the absence of continuation after the word "to," making the sentence incomplete and potentially confusing for readers. Therefore, the complete sentence is: "Maintaining residents' health by

minimizing the risk of disease due to an unclean environment.”

Data 7

In a student observation report titled “Environmental Security System in a Residential Complex,” in the sentence, “Usually the members fathers or young men who live in the area.” (Part description; sentence 2)

This sentence contains an omission error, indicated by the absence of the linking verb “are” after “members,” which makes the predicate unclear. Therefore, the correct sentence is: “Usually, the members are fathers or young men who live in the area.”

Data 8

Another omission error appears in a student observation report titled “Mobile Phone,” in the sentence, “Its use must be controlled and at the right time and place.” (Benefit description; sentence 1)

There is an omission error, indicated by the missing word “carried out” before “at the right time,” which makes the sentence incomplete. Therefore, the correct sentence is: “Its use must be controlled and carried out at the right time and place.”

Addition Errors

This type of error is characterized by the use of excessive elements that disrupt the clarity and flow of a sentence. In line with Zalukhu & Zega (2020), addition errors refer to the presence of elements that are actually unnecessary in proper and correct expression.

Data 1

In a student observation report entitled “D’Topeng,” in the sentence, “However, D’Topeng does not only contain masks, but also contains exhibitions of traditional objects and can be classified into five types based on their materials, namely wood, stone, metal, fabric, and ceramics.” (General statement; sentence 3)

The sentence indicates a simple addition error marked by the words “exhibitions” and

“objects” in redundant plural forms, so one of the repeated elements should be removed. In this sentence, the student only needs to write it as “However, D’Topeng does not only contain masks, but also features exhibitions of traditional objects and can be classified into five types based on their materials, namely wood, stone, metal, fabric, and ceramics.”

Data 2

In a student observation report entitled “D’Topeng,” in the sentence, “Traditional items displayed in the museum’s showcases include traditional weapons, women’s jewelry from the past made of metal, batiks with old patterns, and antique home decorations.” (Description section; sentence 6)

The sentence indicates a simple addition error in the words “batiks” and “old patterns,” and the correct wording should be “batik with classic patterns” to be more precise and efficient. To make the sentence coherent, the student can write the correct version as “Traditional items displayed in the museum’s showcases include traditional weapons, women’s jewelry from the past made of metal, batik with classic patterns, and antique home decorations.”

Data 3

In a student observation report entitled “Cellphone,” in the sentence, “Its use must be controlled and at the right time and time and place.” (Description of benefits; sentence 1)

There is a language error of double marking, indicated by the words “time” and “time,” which carry the same meaning, namely indicating time. Therefore, only one should be used to avoid redundancy in the sentence. The student should write it as “Its use must be controlled and carried out at the right time and place.”

Data 4

In a student observation report entitled “Chair,” in the sentence, “There are various kinds of chairs.” (General statement; sentence 4)

There is a language error of double marking, indicated by the words “various” and “kinds,” which have the same meaning, namely diversity or variety, as well as redundancy in the word “chairs” at the beginning of the sentence because it is already mentioned at the end. Therefore, the addition of the words “kinds” and the repeated “chairs” should be avoided to prevent language errors, and the student should write it as “There are various chairs.”

Data 5

Another addition error is found in a student observation report entitled “Chair,” in the sentence, “Chairs are also widely used in daily life, namely in government sectors, education, social, economic, and other fields.” (Description of benefits; sentence 2)

The sentence contains a double marking addition error indicated by the phrase “in sectors” in plural form, which is redundant because the end of the sentence already states “other fields.” Therefore, the coherent sentence can be written as “Chairs are also widely used in daily life, namely in government, education, social, economic, and other fields.”

Data 6

Another addition error appears in a student observation report entitled “Strawberry,” in the sentence, “Strawberries are cultivated in areas that have cool air.” (General statement; sentence 3)

There is a simple addition error marked by the unnecessary addition of the word “that” before “cool air.” The student should write it as “Strawberries are cultivated in areas with cool air.”

Data 7

Another addition error appears in a student observation report entitled “Strawberry,” in the sentence, “Strawberries are fruits that have many benefits and taste delicious and fresh and have many properties.” (Description of benefits; sentence 1)

A simple addition error is found. Therefore, the sentence structure is unclear and not standard due to the excessive use of conjunctions, namely the word “and,” so the correct sentence should be “Strawberries are fruits that have many benefits, with a delicious and fresh taste and are rich in nutrients.”

Data 8

Another addition error appears in a student observation report entitled “Plastic Waste Recycling,” in the sentence, “There are not only plastic wastes, there are other types of wastes.” (Description section; sentence 2)

The sentence contains an addition error proven by the repetition of the word “wastes” after “types,” which results in a simple addition error. The student can write the correct sentence as “There are not only plastic wastes, but also other types of waste.” so that redundancy is avoided.

Data 9

Another addition error appears in a student observation report entitled “Plastic Waste Recycling,” in the sentence, “It is beneficial for the environment so that there is no accumulation of plastic bottles.” (Description of benefits; sentence 1)

The sentence contains an addition error indicated by the repetition “plastic bottles,” which results in unnecessary redundancy. The correct sentence should be “It is beneficial for the environment so that there is no accumulation of plastic bottles.” so that the sentence becomes concise.

Data 10

In a student observation report entitled “Waste,” there is an addition error in the sentence, “Examples of inorganic waste include detergent containers and leftover food wrappers made of plastics.” (Description section; sentence 4)

There is a simple addition error marked by the repetition in “plastics” and “leftover,” both of which are ineffective and should be simplified to

become concise and clear as “Examples of inorganic waste include detergent containers and leftover food wrappers made of plastic.”

Data 11

In a student observation report entitled “Environmental Security System in a Residential Complex,” in the sentence, “Usually the members are fathers or young men who live in the area.” (Description section; sentence 2)

The sentence contains a double marking addition error indicated by the phrase “young men,” where the word “young” already implies male in general context, so it should be written as “Usually the members are fathers or youths who live in the area.”

Data 12

In a student observation report entitled “Green Beans,” in the sentence, “The stem is upright, with a somewhat slender and branched texture, and is greenish-yellow in color and covered with fine hairs.” (Description section; sentence 5)

There is a simple addition error marked by the repetition “fine hairs,” where “hairs” already indicates plurality, so the repetition is unnecessary. Therefore, the correct sentence is “The stem is upright, somewhat slender and branched in texture, greenish-yellow in color, and covered with fine hairs.”

Misformation Errors

Misformation errors are characterized by the use of morphemes or sentence structures that deviate from established rules. In line with Kusuma (2021), this type of error arises from the incorrect formation or selection of morphemes.

Data 1

In a student’s observation report entitled “Chair,” in the sentence, “Chairs there are various kinds of chair versions.” (General statement; sentence 4)

There is a misformation error in the form of substitution, indicated by the phrase “chairs there are,” which should be replaced with “there

are” to make it more formal and clear. The correct sentence construction to avoid misformation errors is “there are various kinds of chairs.” Misformation errors may occur due to inappropriate word choice, which can affect the clarity of the sentence.

Data 2

Another misformation error is found in a student’s observation report entitled “D’Topeng,” in the sentence,

“Traditional items that fill the museum display cases are traditional weapons, women’s jewellery from the past made of metal, batik fabrics with old patterns, and antique home decorations.” (Part description; sentence 6)

The sentence indicates a misformation error in the form of substitution, marked by the word “old” following “patterns,” which should be revised to “batik with classic patterns” to make it more concise and formal. To achieve coherence, the student can revise the sentence as follows: “Traditional items that fill the museum display cases include traditional weapons, women’s jewellery from the past made of metal, batik with classic patterns, and antique home decorations.”

Data 3

Another misformation error is found in a student’s observation report entitled “Plastic Waste Recycling,” in the sentence,

“We can recycle all of that with our own creativity for any purpose such as making plants placed in bottles that have been decorated and carved as attractively as possible.” (Part description; sentence 2)

There is a misformation error in the form of substitution, indicated by the phrases “can,” “all of that,” “for any purpose,” “such as making plants placed in bottles,” and “placed.” These expressions indicate misformation errors in the form of substitution, which may occur because the student does not fully understand the structure of report writing. Therefore, the correct sentence is “We can recycle all of it with our own creativity for various purposes, for example, making plant pots from used bottles that have

been decorated and carved as attractively as possible.”

Misordering Errors

Misordering errors in the observation reports of students in class X.2 of SMA Negeri 6 Tambun Selatan are consistent with the opinion of Suwono & Amri (2020), namely the incorrect placement of morphemes or sentence elements within the structure of the text.

Data 1

In a student's observation report entitled "Banana Tree," in the sentence,

"The benefits are certainly many, this banana is rich in benefits. Bananas are good for human health, for example the heart." (Benefit description; sentence 1)

The sentence contains a misordering error indicated by an incorrect sentence pattern. The correct sentence that the student should write to avoid misordering errors and to align with subject, predicate, object, and complement structure is "Bananas have many benefits and are good for human health, one of which is maintaining heart health."

Data 2

In a student's observation report entitled "Stick Broom," in the sentence, "A stick broom usually if continuously used will become shorter." (Part description; sentence 3)

There is a misordering error indicated by the incorrect sentence pattern in "if continuously used will become shorter." The correct sentence structure that aligns with subject, predicate, and complement is "A stick broom will usually become shorter if it is used continuously."

Data 3

In a student's observation report entitled "Strawberry," in the sentence, "Strawberries are fruits that have many benefits as well as a delicious and fresh taste and have many properties." (Benefit description; sentence 1)

A misordering error is identified. This is indicated by the improper sentence construction,

particularly the conjunction "as well as" which should be placed closer to the end of the sentence; in relation to this, it can be replaced with "with" to create a more coherent sentence. Therefore, the correct sentence is "Strawberries are fruits that have many benefits, with a delicious and fresh taste as well as being rich in properties."

CONCLUSION

This study examines the flexibility and manipulability of language, particularly focusing on the use of abbreviations and acronyms in Indonesian and their comparison with Arabic. Language is often manipulated for specific purposes, and abbreviations are one form of this manipulation. Abbreviations and acronyms are widely used across various fields in Indonesia, including politics, economics, social issues, and the media. However, these abbreviations frequently deviate from established rules and can lead to ambiguity.

In this discussion, Hadi (2000) states that acronyms in Arabic have developed significantly in recent years. Further analysis by Kata (1970) reveals common errors in the use of abbreviations and acronyms in print media, as found in the Kendari Pos newspaper edition of March 2, 2012.

The following key points can be summarized:

a. Translating abbreviations from Indonesian to Arabic faces several challenges, including differences in the number and characteristics of abbreviation formation, and linguistic structure. Arabic abbreviations often derive from root words, unlike the more flexible nature of Indonesian.

b. Arabic has far fewer abbreviations compared to Indonesian, creating difficulties for translators in finding appropriate equivalents or providing suitable explanations in Arabic.

c. The same abbreviation in Indonesian can have multiple meanings depending on the context, which can lead to ambiguity. Translators must understand the context and the speaker's intention to translate accurately.

Suggestions/Ideas:

1. If a speaker is using several abbreviations or acronyms in a speech or if the speech is being listened to via audio, the speaker should first state the full form of each abbreviation or acronym at least once during the speech if it will be used repeatedly.
2. If the formation of an abbreviation or acronym closely resembles a standard word in the KBBI (Indonesian Dictionary), it is advisable to write it with hyphens between each letter in the abbreviation or between every two initial letters in the acronym.

If a TV news segment includes several abbreviations or acronyms, their full forms should be displayed as notes on the side of the screen to assist viewers.

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