

ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' LANGUAGE ERRORS IN WRITING SHORT STORIES IN ENGLISH LEARNING AT JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstrak - Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis kesalahan berbahasa siswa dalam menulis karangan cerita pendek pada pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris di Sekolah Menengah Pertama. Subjek penelitian terdiri dari 38 siswa kelas VIII SMP Negeri 3 Payung, terbagi menjadi dua kelas: VIII A dan VIII B. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui pengumpulan karangan, observasi, dan wawancara singkat. Data dianalisis dengan mengidentifikasi, mengklasifikasikan, dan menghitung frekuensi kesalahan berbahasa pada empat kategori: ejaan, diksi/kosakata, struktur kalimat, dan penyusunan paragraf. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kesalahan paling dominan terjadi pada struktur kalimat (35%), diikuti oleh diksi/kosakata (26%), ejaan (22%), dan penyusunan paragraf (17%). Contoh kesalahan meliputi kalimat tidak lengkap, pemilihan kosakata yang kurang sesuai konteks, penulisan kata yang salah, dan paragraf yang tidak koheren. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa pengajaran menulis EFL perlu bersifat holistik, menekankan latihan menyusun kalimat, memperkaya kosakata, membimbing penyusunan paragraf, dan membiasakan siswa membaca teks bahasa Inggris.

Kata kunci: Kesalahan berbahasa, Menulis cerita pendek, Bahasa Inggris, SMP, EFL

Abstract - This study aims to analyze students' language errors in writing short stories in English learning at junior high school. The subjects consisted of 38 eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Payung, divided into two classes: VIII A and VIII B. This research employed a qualitative descriptive method, with data collected through students' compositions, observations, and brief interviews. The data were analyzed by identifying, classifying, and calculating the frequency of language errors in four categories: spelling, diction/vocabulary, sentence structure, and paragraph organization. The results showed that the most dominant errors occurred in sentence structure (35%), followed by diction/vocabulary (26%), spelling (22%), and paragraph organization (17%). Examples of errors include incomplete sentences, inappropriate word choice, incorrect spelling, and incoherent paragraphs. These findings suggest that EFL writing instruction should adopt a holistic approach, emphasizing sentence construction, vocabulary enrichment, paragraph organization guidance, and encouraging students to read English texts.

Keywords: Language errors, Short story writing, English, Junior High School, EFL

1. INTRODUCTION

English is an international language taught as a foreign language (EFL – English as a Foreign Language) in secondary schools (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 2015). Mastery of English involves four main skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Suharyat & Lusiana, 2023). Among these skills, writing is considered the most complex because it requires mastery of grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, and the ability to compose texts coherently and cohesively (Saputro et al., 2021; Halawa et al., 2023). Good writing skills not only reflect linguistic competence but also students' ability to express ideas, convey messages, and think critically in English (Malini et al., 2022; Isgiarno et al., 2020; Rahman & Ekkayokkaya, 2024).

In the context of EFL learning in secondary schools, short story writing serves as an important indicator to assess students' ability to apply various language aspects (Dwirsyah,

History:

Received : 20 August 2025

Revised : 27 August 2025

Accepted : 7 September 2025

Published : 10 September 2025

Publisher: Universitas PGRI Palembang

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2020; Shi et al., 2024; Phetsangkhad & Prakai, 2022). Writing short stories allows students to integrate vocabulary, sentence structure, spelling, and paragraph organization in practice (El-Mahdy et al., 2019; Oktaviani & Chan, 2023). Moreover, this activity encourages students to develop creativity, imagination, and narrative thinking skills, making their writing not only linguistically correct but also engaging and communicative (Girsang et al., 2023; Smith, K., Mason, B., & Krashen, 2021). However, preliminary observations at SMP Negeri 3 Payung revealed that many students still face difficulties in writing short stories. Some of the main difficulties identified include organizing sentences logically, choosing context-appropriate vocabulary, writing correct spelling, and arranging story flow and ideas systematically in paragraphs (Febriana et al., 2023). These difficulties can affect the overall quality of students' writing, including their ability to convey ideas clearly and logically.

One factor contributing to students' low writing skills is the lack of reading habits in English. Students who rarely read tend to have limited vocabulary and limited exposure to various sentence structures and language styles, making it difficult for them to express ideas creatively and systematically (De Wilde et al., 2020). In addition, limited writing practice in class also hinders the development of writing skills. According to Crompton et al. (2024) and Moon & Kwan (2022), consistent writing practice is essential for familiarizing students with text structures, developing sentence composition skills, and improving spelling and appropriate word choice.

Writing short stories serves as an effective evaluation medium for English teachers. By analyzing students' compositions, teachers can assess students' abilities in selecting vocabulary, constructing sentences, organizing paragraphs, and developing story flow. Analyzing language errors, such as spelling, diction, sentence structure, and paragraph organization, provides a clear understanding of areas that need improvement in writing instruction (Corder, 2009; Tarigan, 2019; Prasetyo & Erwin, 2022). With this understanding, teachers can design appropriate interventions, such as repeated writing exercises, reading habits, and individualized feedback to improve students' writing skills.

In EFL writing instruction, students' language errors are often studied through error analysis. Error analysis is a systematic procedure to identify, classify, and evaluate language errors made by students, aiming to understand error patterns and their underlying causes (H. G. Tarigan, 2021). According to Febriyanti (2023), errors in foreign language learning can be categorized as follows: (1) Spelling and punctuation errors: mistakes in word spelling and the use of punctuation marks; (2) Diction/vocabulary errors: inappropriate choice of words for the context or meaning; (3) Sentence structure errors: mistakes in sentence construction involving subject, predicate, object, and modifiers; (4) Paragraph organization errors: errors in organizing story flow, coherence, and cohesion between paragraphs.

These errors not only affect the quality of writing but also hinder the communication of the intended message through the story. Therefore, analyzing language errors is important not only as an evaluation tool but also as a basis for planning more effective teaching strategies. Previous research has shown that short story writing is effective in assessing overall language competence. According to Fitria (2024), narrative writing allows teachers to evaluate skills in word choice, sentence construction, paragraph organization, and story development. Meanwhile Oktaviani & Chan (2023), emphasized that students who regularly write stories are more sensitive to accurate and creative language use compared to students who write infrequently.

Furthermore, error analysis also serves as a foundation for improving teaching strategies. According to Mulatu & Regassa (2022), spelling and diction errors can reduce the clarity of

the message, while sentence structure and paragraph errors can disrupt story flow and affect the quality of idea communication. By understanding these error patterns, teachers can design more focused writing exercises, provide appropriate feedback, and encourage students to read and write consistently.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Method

This study used a qualitative descriptive method because it aimed to identify and describe students' language errors in writing short stories systematically, factually, and accurately without intervening in the research subjects (Sugiyono, 2021).

2.2 Research Subject

The research subjects were eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Payung, totaling 38 students, divided into two classes: VIII A (19 students) and VIII B (19 students). The subjects were selected using purposive sampling, specifically students who actively participated in English lessons and had prior experience in writing short stories.

2.3 Research Object

The research object was students' short story compositions, with a focus on language errors, including:

- Spelling and punctuation errors
- Diction/vocabulary errors
- Sentence structure errors (incorrect subject, predicate, or modifiers)
- Paragraph organization errors (incoherent story flow or weak cohesion between paragraphs).

2.4 Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through several stages:

- Collection of compositions: Students wrote short stories based on themes provided by the teacher.
- Documentation: All compositions were recorded and used as research documents.
- Observation: The researcher observed students during the writing process to identify difficulties.
- Brief interviews: Conducted with several students to obtain additional information about their challenges.

2.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed qualitatively through the following steps:

- Collect all students' short story compositions.
- Identify language errors in each composition.
- Classify errors into categories of spelling, diction, sentence structure, and paragraph organization.
- Count the frequency of each type of error.
- Present interpretations and qualitative descriptions of the errors to illustrate common error patterns among students.

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2.6 Data Validity

To ensure data validity, triangulation of sources and methods was employed:

- Observer triangulation: Two English teachers independently assessed the errors.
- Method triangulation: The results of composition analysis were compared with brief student interviews.

2.7 Research Procedure

The research procedure involved the following steps:

- Determine the student sample.
- Provide instructions for writing short stories.
- Collect all compositions.
- Identify language errors.
- Classify and calculate the frequency of errors.
- Compile a descriptive report on students' language errors.

2.8 Data Analysis Presentation

The results were presented in the form of error frequency tables, percentages, and qualitative descriptions explaining the patterns of students' errors.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

3.1.1 Frequency of Language Errors

Based on the analysis of 38 short story compositions by eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Payung, various types of language errors were identified. The errors were analyzed according to four main categories: spelling, diction/vocabulary, sentence structure, and paragraph organization. The frequency of errors is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency of Students' Language Errors in Short Story Compositions

Error Category	Errors in VIII A	Errors in VIII B	Total Errors	Description
Spelling	20	18	38	Errors in word spelling or incorrect use of punctuation. Examples: "goin" → "going", "walkked" → "walked".
Diction/Vocabulary	24	22	46	Incorrect word choice not suitable for the story context, e.g., using casual everyday language in a formal narrative. Examples: "very happy" → "delighted".
Sentence Structure	32	30	62	Errors in sentence construction, such as incomplete sentences, incorrect subject-predicate-object, or wrong prepositions. Examples: "He went school with friends" → "He went to school with his friends".
Paragraph Organization	16	14	30	Errors in story flow or paragraph coherence. Examples: character introduction appears in the middle of the story, disrupting the

				narrative sequence.
Total	92	84	176	Total errors found in 38 analyzed compositions.

Description:

The table shows that **sentence structure** errors were the most frequent (62 errors), followed by diction/vocabulary (46), spelling (38), and paragraph organization (30). This indicates that students need guidance in constructing coherent sentences, choosing appropriate vocabulary, and organizing paragraphs for a smoother story flow.

3.1.2 Percentage of Language Errors

The percentage of errors was calculated to show the proportion of each category relative to total errors. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Percentage of Students' Language Errors

Error Category	Percentage (%)	Description
Spelling	22%	22% of total errors were related to spelling and punctuation. Although lower than sentence structure errors, spelling is important to maintain message clarity.
Diction/Vocabulary	26%	26% of errors were due to inappropriate word choice, affecting narrative quality.
Sentence Structure	35%	35% of errors were sentence structure errors, the most dominant, reflecting students' difficulties in constructing coherent sentences.
Paragraph Organization	17%	17% of errors were related to paragraph organization and story flow. Though the lowest percentage, this aspect is crucial for narrative continuity.
Total	100%	Shows the overall distribution of errors in students' compositions.

Description:

The percentage table confirms that sentence structure is the primary problem for students, while paragraph organization is the least frequent error. This emphasizes that EFL writing instruction should focus on sentence construction, vocabulary enrichment, and guidance on organizing coherent paragraphs.

3.1.3 Examples of Errors Found

Spelling:

"goin" → should be "going"
 "walkked" → should be "walked"

Diction/Vocabulary:

"very happy" → should be "delighted" in a formal narrative context
 "a lot of fun" → should be "enjoyable experience"

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Sentence Structure:

"He went school with friends" → should be "He went to school with his friends"

"She like reading books" → should be "She likes reading books"

Paragraph Organization:

Character introduction appears in the middle of the story, disrupting the narrative flow. Transitional paragraphs between conflict and climax are unclear, making the story feel disjointed.

Description:

These examples show that spelling and diction errors affect language quality, while sentence structure and paragraph organization errors impact coherence and narrative flow. Therefore, EFL writing instruction should emphasize holistic writing, training students simultaneously in spelling, vocabulary, sentence structure, and paragraph organization.

3.2 Discussion

a. Spelling Errors

Spelling errors frequently appear in students' compositions. These errors are usually related to insufficient skills in writing letters, using punctuation, and word spelling. This aligns with Tarigan (1993), who stated that low reading ability directly affects writing skills.

b. Diction/Vocabulary Errors

Diction errors occur because students are not accustomed to adjusting vocabulary according to the story context. Using overly casual, everyday vocabulary reduces language quality. Regular reading of English texts and consistent writing practice are necessary to enrich students' vocabulary.

c. Sentence Structure Errors

Sentence structure errors are the most dominant. Students struggle to construct coherent, complete, and clear sentences. Common mistakes include incomplete sentences, incorrect use of conjunctions, or inconsistent subject-predicate agreement. Repeated writing practice with teacher guidance is required to master grammatical rules.

d. Paragraph Organization Errors

Although less frequent, paragraph errors still need attention. Incoherent paragraphs disrupt the story flow. Teachers should guide students to create a story outline before writing, making the narrative easier for readers to follow.

e. Relationship Between Aspects of Errors

The four aspects of errors are interconnected. Spelling and diction errors affect sentence quality, while sentence errors influence paragraph organization. Therefore, teaching short story writing should be holistic, emphasizing spelling, vocabulary, sentence structure, and paragraph organization simultaneously.

f. Implications of the Research Findings

Based on the findings, several implications for teaching English language are as follows:

- Emphasize the development of sentence structure.
- Encourage students to read English short stories to improve diction and spelling.
- Provide regular writing practice to develop paragraph organization and story flow.
- Give individualized feedback to help students correct errors directly.

4 CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that students' ability to write short stories at SMP Negeri 3 Payung still needs improvement. The most dominant errors were found in sentence structure, followed by diction/vocabulary, spelling, and paragraph organization. This indicates that students still struggle to construct coherent sentences, choose appropriate vocabulary, spell words correctly, and organize ideas systematically in paragraphs.

The low writing ability is also related to limited reading habits, resulting in minimal vocabulary and language repertoire. Developing reading habits and consistent writing practice are effective strategies to enhance short story writing skills and overall English competence.

These findings highlight the importance of the teacher's role in providing constructive feedback and repeated practice emphasizing linguistic aspects and narrative structure. Teachers should guide students in constructing sentences, enriching vocabulary, spelling correctly, and organizing coherent paragraphs.

Therefore, language error analysis can serve as an effective evaluation tool for English teachers, as well as a foundation for designing more effective teaching strategies, improving the quality of students' short stories, and enhancing their overall English proficiency.

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