

ANALYSIS EFL STUDENTS' ERROR IN USING PERSONAL PRONOUN IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT

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Abstract

This research aimed to investigate the errors in using personal pronouns in writing descriptive texts made by seventh-grade students at SMP Islam Soerjo Alam, Malang, Indonesia. The study is qualitative, aiming to explore and understand the meanings individuals or groups attribute to a social human problem, as outlined by Creswell (2018). The subjects of this research were 21 seventh-grade students chosen using random sampling. To analyze the data, firstly, the researcher asked the teacher to collect her students' writing descriptive text as the data then identified the errors by analyzing them, after that the researcher calculated the data taken, and the last made the percentage in each category. The result showed that there were 35 items of errors found in student's writing. The most dominant errors found in object pronouns with a percentage was 37,1% (13 errors) and errors in subject pronouns found in students' writing was 34.2% (12 errors). After that, possessive adjective errors found was 25.7% (9 errors), and the last there was an error in reflexive with a percentage was 2,8% (1 error). So, it can be concluded that the most errors in personal pronouns for the seventh-grade student of SMP Islam Soerjo Alam, Malang come from object pronouns. By taking this study hopefully, it can drive further researchers to explore and analyze the personal pronoun error aspects that are not taken by the writer in this study. The research recommends further investigation of pronoun acquisition across various educational settings (high school, higher education, non-educational) and a deeper analysis of student pronoun errors.

Key Words: *Error analysis, personal pronouns, descriptive text*

INTRODUCTION

Mastering grammar, including the simple present tense, is crucial for effective writing, especially in descriptive texts. Descriptive writing aims to vividly portray a person, place, or thing, employing sensory details to engage readers. Understanding its generic structure, which typically includes an introduction and detailed description, is essential for effective composition.

Error analysis plays a vital role in language learning, helping educators understand common mistakes and adapt teaching methods accordingly. Personal pronouns, a fundamental aspect of language, are often misused in writing. They serve to replace nouns and can be subjective or objective, but improper usage can lead to confusion.

Personal pronouns serve as efficient substitutes for nouns, enhancing sentence clarity and flow. By replacing nouns with pronouns, we avoid repetition and create more concise language. These pronouns flexibly adapt their form based on their specific role within a sentence. For instance, "I" is used when the speaker is the subject, while "me" is employed as an object. This adaptability ensures grammatical accuracy and precision, making communication smoother and more effective. Additionally, Kuo (1999) stated that the selection of specific personal pronouns in various contexts, and whether they are used at all in journal articles, especially in scientific ones, can often reveal how writers view themselves, their interaction with readers, and their connection to their discourse community.

The research mentioned explores various aspects of error analysis in students' writing of descriptive texts across different educational settings. In "Students' Error in Writing Descriptive Text in the Junior High School Viewed from Its Indicators" by Yani (2022) and "An Analysis of Students Error in Writing Descriptive Text at the ninth grade of SMPN 07 Kotabumi academic year 2020/2021" Maulana (2022), the predominant errors observed were misinformation, omission, misordering, and addition errors, with misinformation being the most common. Similarly, "An Analysis of Students' Error in Using Personal Pronoun on Writing Descriptive Text of First Semester at Institute Agama Islam (IAI) Al-Azhaar Lubuklinggau" by Sari, (2020) found misinformation errors to be dominant, possibly due to factors like difficulty in understanding the material or lack of interest. Furthermore, "Error Analysis on Using Personal Pronoun in Writing Descriptive Text" by Pratiwi et. Al (2019) and "Error Analysis of the Students' English Written Descriptive Text" by Nadya et. Al (2021) both highlighted misinformation errors as the most common, particularly in using personal pronouns. These errors often involved using the wrong form of personal pronouns, like "they" instead of "she" or "he," and omission errors where personal pronouns were needed but not used. Abstract concepts, such as emotions or feelings, were noted as contexts where students were more prone to such errors. Overall, these studies shed light on common challenges students face in writing descriptive texts, offering insights into areas where targeted support and instruction may be beneficial.

While each article focuses on errors observed in a specific context or population, there is limited comparative analysis across different educational settings or student populations. Therefore, the researcher conducted this research about EFL Students' Error in Using Personal Pronouns in Writing Descriptive Text.

METHOD

This research was descriptive qualitative and aimed at explaining errors made by SMP Islam Soerjo Alam seventh-grade students when utilizing personal pronouns in descriptive writing. Data from the students' writing samples served as the base for the analysis. To gather information about students' errors use of personal pronouns when writing descriptive text, the researcher in this study used the researcher himself and documentation. The researcher is the person who conducts the research looks for the data, does an observation, does an analysis, and reports it. So, the researcher was the primary instrument and documented in the form of students' descriptive text writing that was analyzed to know the kinds of their errors in using personal pronouns. The subject of the study is the seventh grade of SMP Islam Soerjo Alam, Malang, with a total of 21 students. The researcher chose random sampling because the researcher hoped to achieve a thorough understanding of individuals and their backgrounds. To collect the data, the researcher does some steps, such as the researcher asks the teacher to collect their student's writing descriptive text. After that, the researcher collects the texts and analyzes the descriptive text made by the student. In the analysis of the result, the descriptive qualitative method uses the following procedures in the process of the data collection identifying the errors of using personal pronouns in students writing descriptive text by using the table, describing the results of analysis of the error using personal pronoun in students' writing descriptive, explaining error why the errors occur, and evaluating the error to help students learn Second Language. The researcher analyzed the errors in students' descriptive writing related to the usage of personal pronouns, determining their frequency from most to least common. Subsequently, the researcher computed the percentages for each error category based on the collected data. To calculate the frequency of errors in each category, the researcher employed the following formula.

$$P = \frac{N_1}{\Sigma} \times 100\%$$

Where,

P is the percentage of errors

N₁ is the total of the given errors

ΣN is the total of the errors

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher presented identification and classification errors of personal pronouns in students' descriptive text which found that eleven students chose a theme about places, eight students chose a theme about people, and two students chose a theme about objects. After the researcher analyzed, eight students did not make the error at all.

Table 4.1 Frequency of Personal Pronoun Error

Types of Personal Pronoun Errors	Frequency	Percentage
Object Pronoun	13 error	37,1%
Subject Pronoun	12 errors	34,2%
Possessive Adjective	9 errors	25,7%
Reflexive	1 error	2,8%

The researcher found from the table that the errors made by seventh-grade students in SMP Islam Soerjo Alam, Malang, thirteen errors in object pronouns with a percentage of 37,1%, twelve errors in subject pronouns with a percentage of 34,2%, possessive adjective nine errors with the percentage 25,7%, and one error in reflexive pronoun with the percentage 2,8% in the use of personal pronoun in writing descriptive.

1. Subject Pronoun Error

From the table, the researcher found twelve errors in the use of subject pronouns in writing descriptive. It is shown from samples 5 and 15 that the researcher found that most of the errors in using subject pronouns were because the writer described her 'girl' friend

but she wrote "he." So, the correct pronoun is using "she." After that in samples 7 and 13 "its a place where kids and family come together to spend holiday" instead of "It is a place where kids and family come together to spend holiday." And "its a place where kids and family come together to spend holiday" instead of "it is a place where kids and family come together to spend holiday" Its (without an apostrophe) is the possessive form of it, so it means "belonging to it." Thus, the correct pronoun is "It is."

Table 4.2 Table of Subject Pronoun Error

No Sample	Identified sentences	Correct sentence	Explanation
Sample 5	He is my classmate	She is my classmate	The sample told about her girl-friend, which the correct pronoun is She
Sample 7	Its surrounded by green and tall trees	It is surrounded by green and tall trees	Its (without an apostrophe) is the possessive form of it, so it means "belonging to it."
Sample 13	its a place where kids and family come together to spend holiday	It is a place where kids and family come together to spend holiday	Its (without an apostrophe) is the possessive form of it, so it means "belonging to it."
Sample 15	He often tells me about the adventures he had and the lessons she learned along the way	She often tells me about the adventures she had and the lessons she learned along the way	The sample told about her girl-friend, which the correct pronoun is She

2. Object Pronoun Error

From the table, the researcher found thirteen errors in the use of object pronouns in writing descriptive. From sample 4, "I feel the cool air on **mine** face and hear sound water." instead of "I feel the cool air on **my** face and hear sound water." In samples 5, 14, and 16 most of the errors in using object pronouns were because the writer uses **I** instead of **me** "...he always make **I** laugh" instead of "...she always make **me** laugh." From sample 10 and 16 the writer's error is using **he** instead of **him**, "Iam very thankful have great father like **he**" instead of "I am very thankful have great father like **him**." Because the use of **He** is a pronoun used as the subject of a sentence. While **Him** is a pronoun used as the object of a sentence. In other sentences from samples 14 and 15 the error is using **him** instead of **her**, they describe a girl but they wrote him "I like to play with **him**" instead of "I like to play with **her**" and in sample 15 the error is using **me** instead of **my** "... often give **I** money"

instead of “... often give **me** money.”

Table 4.3 Table of Object Pronoun Error

No Sample	Identified sentences	Correct sentence	Explanation
Sample 4	I feel the cool air on mine face and hear sound water	I feel the cool air on my face and hear sound water	“My” indicates ownership by the speaker, “mine” stands alone to show possession
Sample 5	... always make I laugh	... always make me laugh	"me" is the word to use when an action is done to you
Sample 10	Iam very thankful have great father like he	Iam very thankful have great father like him	He is a pronoun used as the subject of a sentence. While Him is a pronoun used as the object of a sentence.
Sample 14	I like to play with him She also help I when I get in trouble	I like to play with her She also help me when I get in trouble	The sample told about girl, which the correct pronoun is her "me" is the word to use when an action is done to you
Sample 15	and I always visit him during holidays with my family and always shows love to I	and I always visit her during holidays with my family and always shows love to me	The sample told about girl, which the correct pronoun is her "me" is the word to use when an action is done to you
Sample 16	I usually call he hafiz because he is always help I	I usually call him hafiz because he is always help me	He is a pronoun used as the subject of a sentence. While Him is a pronoun used as the object of a sentence. "me" is the word to use when an action is done to you

3. Possessive Adjective Error

There are nine errors in the use of possessive adjectives in writing descriptive. From samples 8 and 13 they use **you** instead of **your**, the correct is using **your** because **your** is always followed by a noun that belongs to, “*it is great place to spend holiday with **you** family*” instead of “*it is a great place to spend holiday with **your** family*”. Then from samples 10, 11, and 16, they used **He** instead of **His**, the correct is using **His** because **His** is the possessive pronoun, which means belonging to him. “***He** skin is brown and he has a muscular body*” instead of “***His** skin is brown and he has a muscular body*”. In another sentence from samples 15 and 20, they wrote **me** instead of **my** while the correct one uses **my** because **my** is the word used to show possession by **I**, “...and **me** brother” instead of “...and **my** brother.” In sample 17, they are using **they** instead of **their**, the correct one uses **their** because **their** is the possessive form of the third person plural pronoun, “By

joining sport class, practice Arabic or English with **they** teacher, or join the extracurricular” instead of “By joining sport class, practice Arabic or English with **their** teacher, or join the extracurricular” in sample 19 they are using **his** instead of **her**, the correct is using **her** because they describe a mother (woman), “She is a patient and diligent mother who always help **his** family when we have problem” instead of “She is a patient and diligent mother who always help **her** family when we have problem.”

Table 4.4 Table of Possessive Adjective Error

No	Sample	Identified sentences	Correct sentence	Explanation
	Sample 8	it is great place to spend holiday with you family	it is great place to spend holiday with your family	‘your’ is always followed by a noun which belongs to
	Sample 10	He skin is brown and he has a muscular body	His skin is brown and he has a muscular body	“His” is the possessive pronoun. It means, “belonging to him”
	Sample 11	He have a big smile and he laugh funny	He have a big smile and his laugh funny	“His” is the possessive pronoun. It means, “belonging to him”
	Sample 13	The place is really fun to play and holiday with you family or friends	The place is really fun to play and holiday with your family or friends	‘your’ is always followed by a noun which belongs to
	Sample 15	... and me brother	... and my brother	“My” is the word used to show possession by “I”.
	Sample 16	He name Muhammad hafiz	His name Muhammad hafiz	“His” is the possessive pronoun. It means, “belonging to him”
	Sample 17	By joining sport class, practice Arabic or English with they teacher, or join the extracurricular	By joining sport class, practice Arabic or English with their teacher, or join the extracurricular	Their is the possessive form of the third-person plural pronoun “they.” It means “belonging to them.”
	Sample 19	She is a patient and diligent mother who always help his family when we have problem	She is a patient and diligent mother who always help her family when we have problem	The sample told about girl, which the correct pronoun is her
	Sample 20	The color of me favorite bag is black	The color of my favorite bag is black	“My” is the word used to show possession by “I”.

4. Reflexive Error

There is one error in reflexive. As we can see on the table, “*you will find **you self** surrounded by a lot of attractions like volcano roller coaster, flying tornado, mini train, convoy car and other.*” instead of “*you will find **yourself** surrounded by a lot of attractions like volcano roller coaster, flying tornado, mini train, convoy car and other.*” Additionally, most of the errors that the students made were misinformation errors. The students wrote the pronoun in the incorrect form.

Table 4.5 Table of Reflexive Error

No Sample	Identified sentences	Correct sentence	Explanation
Sample 13	you will find you self surrounded by a lot of attractions like volcano roller coaster, flying tornado, mini train, convoy car and other	you will find yourself surrounded by a lot of attractions like volcano roller coaster, flying tornado, mini train, convoy car and other	Yourself as a reflexive pronoun is used to show that the addressee is both the subject and the object of a sentence.

Based on the findings, students' errors in using pronouns can be attributed to teachers, whether native or non-native, failing to provide clear models of the target language in class Saragih (2019). Similarly, Firdausi (2014) found that students struggle with distinguishing between subject, object, and possessive pronouns. This aligns with the observation from an English teacher at SMP Islam Soerjo Alam, who noted that students often have difficulty understanding basic pronoun concepts and identifying the correct referent. In addition to the reasons provided, another factor contributing to students' errors in using personal pronouns in descriptive writing is their limited exposure to diverse language contexts and lack of practice in varied linguistic situations (Haryanto et al., 2019). This deficiency can lead to a superficial grasp of pronoun usage, affecting their ability to apply these concepts accurately in their writing. Haryanto et. Al (2019) emphasizes that students' proficiency is significantly influenced by their exposure to and practice with the target language in different communicative settings. This also indicates that junior high students in Indonesia

have not obtained sufficient exposure to the awareness of using language learning strategies (Zuhairi, 2016).

It was identified that the most common error in personal pronoun usage was object pronouns with 37,1%. This indicates significant confusion among students in selecting the correct pronouns for subjects and objects within sentences. This result resonates with Mustaqim (2018) that the highest frequency of error is in object pronouns with 60 items or 40%. With those percentages, the teacher should pay more attention to teaching personal pronouns in terms of object pronouns. In contrast, other studies done by Suryani et. Al (2017) reported 70 items (73.68%) of errors related to possessive pronouns in their research. Similarly, Nursahadah (2014) found frequent errors in the use of possessive pronouns among students. Additionally, Ramayanti et. Al (2023) highlighted ongoing difficulties faced by students in using personal pronouns, particularly with possessive adjectives and pronouns. Most students possibly made errors in using the personal pronoun as an object pronoun because they did not know the difference between using a subject pronoun and an object pronoun. A subject pronoun is used in the subject of a sentence. A subject pronoun indicates who or what the sentence is about while an object pronoun is used to indicate what receives the action in a sentence. Thus, the use of subject pronouns and object pronouns are different forms and places (Caulfield, 2023).

The students often make errors in agreeing with the form of verbs and personal pronouns as subject or object. It possibly happens because of their confusion in selecting which pronouns should be used to refer to personal pronouns as subject or object in singular and plural. Differentiating subject and object pronouns, especially when considering singular and plural forms, can be a conceptual obstacle for students (Hardiyanti et. Al 2015). This learning obstacle can manifest as subject-verb disagreement within sentences. Hardiyanti et. Al (2015) also stated that limited access to instructional materials, particularly for students in remote areas who rely heavily on teacher-centered instruction, can hinder their grasp of pronoun usage. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the instructional approach significantly impacts learning outcomes. Unclear explanations or frequent teacher absences can impede students' comprehension of pronoun functions. It also stated that by

looking at the classroom activities, it can be understood that a less stressful classroom helps students to feel relaxed and write better (Suhartoyo, 2024).

Additionally, based on the English teachers' statement, student engagement plays a crucial role. Even with clear instruction, some students may require additional support due to individual learning styles, motivation levels, or the lack of independent practice at home. In addition, the independent learning environment presents distinct challenges for language acquisition. In the absence of a facilitator, learners may engage in misinterpretations of linguistic structures and pronunciation patterns. Additionally, inadequately presented grammatical explanations within learning materials can lead to the unintentional imitation of errors. These factors can contribute to the fossilization of inaccuracies, making remediation more complex at later stages (Rahmawati, 2021). In addition, the occurrence of these errors can be attributed to several factors, including the influence of students' first language, Bahasa Indonesia, on their understanding and application of English pronouns. According to Brown (2001), this phenomenon, known as interlingual transfer, occurs when language learners transfer patterns and structures from their native language to the target language. In Bahasa Indonesia, there is less differentiation between pronouns for subjects, objects, and possessive adjectives compared to English, which can lead to confusion and errors in English language use.

Understanding and addressing pronoun errors in descriptive texts benefits seventh-grade students in several ways, first, it enhances their awareness and correct usage of pronouns, leading to clearer and more precise writing. Second, mastering pronoun use improves their descriptive writing skills by ensuring coherence and structure. Third, increased confidence in grammar boosts overall writing creativity and effectiveness.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This research aimed to identify errors in personal pronoun usage in descriptive texts written by seventh-grade students at SMP Islam Soerjo Alam, Malang. The study found that object pronoun errors were the most common, accounting for 37.1% of total errors, followed by subject pronoun errors at 34.2%, possessive adjectives at 25.7%, and reflexive pronouns at 2.8%. Contributing factors included limited exposure to diverse contexts,

unclear teaching methods, and the influence of the students' native language, Bahasa Indonesia. The research highlights the need for improved understanding and instruction of personal pronouns to enhance students' writing skills and confidence. Educators are encouraged to use targeted teaching strategies and provide clear examples to address these errors. Future research should explore personal pronoun usage across different educational levels and institutions, and analyze the causes of these errors in greater detail.

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