

**ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' ERRORS AND WRITING FLOW
IN NARRATIVE PARAGRAPH WRITTEN BY THE FIRST SEMESTER
STUDENTS OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF MATARAM**

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ABSTRACT

Writing narrative paragraphs poses challenges for EFL learners due to the demands of grammatical accuracy, coherence, and narrative flow. This study aims to analyze error types, identify their causes, and evaluate the writing flow in narrative paragraphs produced by first-semester English Education students at the University of Mataram, academic year 2024/2025. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, data were collected from 15 student writings and interviews with selected participants. The findings reveal that addition and misformation errors were the most frequent, followed by omission and misordering. The primary causes of errors stemmed from first language interference and direct translation, with carelessness contributing in some cases. In terms of writing flow, most students used transition signals and compound sentences effectively, yet struggled with proper comma usage. These results highlight the need for explicit instruction on narrative structure and focused feedback to enhance academic writing proficiency.

Keywords: Narrative paragraphs, Types of Error Analysis, Causes of Errors, Writing Flow

A. Introduction

Writing serves as an instrument of communication between individuals. Writing enables individuals to articulate thoughts with precision, as written communication is often more accessible than verbal expression (Helmiyadi et al., 2021). Teaching and learning writing are crucial in modern societies, as writing competence is demanded in many aspects of daily life (Connelly &

Barnett, 2009). Writing proficiency is a fundamental component of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, as it demands not only the ability to express ideas coherently but also mastery of grammatical structures (Rahman, 2022; Raihanah et al., 2017). Among various academic writing forms, narrative paragraph writing is commonly taught to first-year university students as it enables them to describe experiences or events

chronologically (Oshima, A., & Hogue, 1999). Narrative paragraph writing is an important skill for EFL students, requiring proficiency in various aspects, such as organization, vocabulary, content, mechanics, and language use (Sanu, 2016). However, previous studies have shown that EFL learners frequently encounter difficulties in producing well-structured narratives, particularly due to grammatical inaccuracies, limited vocabulary, and incoherent organization (Alka et al., 2023; Refnita et al., 2022). According to Ayu et al. (2003) errors in narrative paragraph writing reveals common challenges faced by students. Studies have identified various types of errors based on Dulay (1982) Surface Strategy Taxonomy, including omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Preliminary observations among first-semester students of the English Education Department at the University of Mataram revealed similar challenges, especially those related to first language interference and insufficient understanding of English sentence construction.

The core issues in students' narrative writing emerge in two primary dimensions: linguistic errors

and narrative flow. Linguistic errors often manifest through omission, addition, misformation, and misordering, as categorized by Dulay et al., (1982). Meanwhile, their root causes are frequently associated with direct translation, mother tongue interference, and carelessness, as outlined by Norrish (1983). On the other hand, narrative flow refers to how students organize ideas chronologically using transition signals, the sentence structure using compound sentences, and proper three-comma rules usage as explained; use a comma after a transition signal placed at the beginning of a sentence, before a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence, and do not use a comma to separate two words or phrases in a simple sentence., which are essential for textual coherence and readability (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). Thus, a comprehensive investigation into both error types and narrative flow is needed to understand the students' writing performance more holistically.

This study specifically aims to describe: (1) the types of errors found in students' narrative paragraphs, (2) the underlying causes of these errors

from the learners' perspectives, and (3) the extent to which students demonstrate appropriate narrative writing flow. By combining textual analysis with students' reflections, this research provides deeper insight into the interplay between linguistic competence and writing organization among novice EFL writers.

In terms of scholarly contribution, this study addresses a research gap in narrative writing research at the university level, where most previous studies have primarily focused on grammatical errors alone (Haryadi & Putra, 2018; Pasaribu, 2021), without examining narrative coherence and flow. By integrating Dulay's error taxonomy with Norrish's causal framework and narrative flow criteria by Oshima and Hogue, this study offers a more comprehensive pedagogical implication for improving writing instruction in EFL contexts. The findings are expected to inform educators in designing targeted teaching strategies that foster both accuracy and coherence in students' academic writing.

B. Research Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to examine the types and causes of

linguistic errors and the narrative flow in students' writing through in-depth textual analysis rather than statistical generalization. This approach was appropriate for capturing authentic writing challenges faced by EFL learners and interpreting error patterns within their academic context (Creswell, 2018). It also enabled integration of document analysis with student perspectives obtained from interviews.

The participants were fifteen first-semester students in the English Education Program at the University of Mataram in the 2024/2025 academic year. Purposive sampling was used based on low performance in narrative paragraph assignments submitted through the SPADA platform. Five students with the highest frequency of errors were then interviewed to explore the causes of their writing difficulties. Students' narrative texts served as the primary data, while interviews functioned as supporting data.

Three instruments were used in this study. A document analysis sheet helped identify and classify errors according to Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982) Surface Strategy

Taxonomy (omission, addition, misinformation, misordering). Semi-structured interview guides were used to examine error sources based on Norrish's (1983) classification, including translation, L1 interference, and carelessness. A writing flow checklist adapted from Oshima and Hogue (2007) was applied to assess transition signals, compound sentences, and comma usage. These instruments ensured comprehensive evaluation of grammatical accuracy and narrative coherence.

Data were collected in three stages: retrieving narrative writings from SPADA, analyzing the texts for grammatical errors, and interviewing selected students to gather explanations about writing strategies and challenges, particularly regarding L1 and translation influence.

Data analysis involved identifying and categorizing errors using Dulay et al.'s (1982) taxonomy, followed by examining interview responses through Norrish's (1983) framework to determine underlying causes. Writing coherence was assessed using the writing-flow checklist focusing on transitions, sentence organization, and punctuation.

C.Findings and Discussion

Types of Errors

The analysis revealed 29 student writing errors categorized into four types as specified by Dulay (1982): omission, addition, misinformation, and misordering. Table 1 illustrates that omission had (5 errors) followed by addition and misinformation which had the same number of errors (10 errors) each type. Lastly, misordering errors with (4 errors) being the least frequent of errors.

Table 1. Types of Errors Analysis

Error Types	Frequency	Percentage
Omission	5	17.24 %
Addition	10	34.48 %
Misinformation	10	34.48 %
Misordering	4	13.8 %
Total	29	100 %

The table above demonstrated 5 cases of omission errors (17.24%). Omission refers to the absence of a required grammatical element in a sentence. Most omissions involved the absence of articles, preposition, plural markers, subjects, or infinitive markers. An example of omission error can be found in Student 6 writing. The error was detected in the sentence, *"The event was planned by all friends from high school, and some of them participated."* In this sentence, the word *"my"* is missing between the

words all and friends. This error caused the meaning to be inaccurate or ambiguous because a grammatical element (possessive adjective “my”) is omitted. The correct version of the sentence is: *“The event was planned by all of my friends from high school, and some of them participated.”* The error indicate that students frequently miss essential grammatical components, especially those that are not present in the same pattern in their native language.

There were (34.48%) addition errors identified in 15 student writings. Addition errors, characterized by the inclusion of unnecessary items in the text. redundant prepositions, articles, conjunctions, and verbs represent several examples of additive errors. For example, Student 1 made an addition error in the sentence, *“One of the most special memories from my childhood is from when I was 8 years old..”* where there are two words from, which is one of them unnecessary. The proper sentence would be like this: *“One of the most special memories from my childhood is when I was 8 years old...”*. The addition error above show that students sometimes want to reinforce the meaning in their

writing, but instead end up adding unnecessary words.

Furthermore, (38.48 %) 10 misinformation errors were identified. Misformation refers to using the right grammatical item but in the wrong form, including errors related to tense, plurals, or word usage. For example, Student 5 made a misinformation error in the sentence *“...where my sister had the time of their life sliding down the colorful water slides.”* In that sentence, there is an error in the use of the pronoun sister, which is singular, but used their instead. Therefore, the more correct form of the sentence would be: *“...where my sister had the time of her life sliding down the colorful water slides.”* Misformation errors such as in the example above occur because students lack knowledge of the grammar of the target language they are learning.

Finally, the least identified error was misordering, with 4 errors (13.8 %) out of 15 student writings. Misordering errors happen when the sequence of words or phrases in a sentence is placed incorrectly, making the sentence confusing or unclear. The examples below will clarify errors in writing specifically to misordering errors. For example, Student 12 made

a misordering error in the sentence: *“After waking up, I usually immediately take ablution for the morning prayer.”* This misordering error appeared because the placement of the adverbs usually and immediately close together makes the sentence structure feel awkward and unnatural. The order of the adverbs should be rearranged to make it clearer, for example: *“After waking up, I usually take ablution immediately for the morning prayer.”* Misordering errors occur because students demonstrate occasional struggles with English sentence structure, especially when they transfer patterns from their first language.

In summary, these errors can be categorized as follows: omission (17.24%), addition (34.48%), misformation (34.48%), and misordering errors (13.8%). In general, omission errors occurred when students left out important grammatical elements that are absent in their native language, while addition errors happened when they unnecessarily inserted extra words in an attempt to clarify meaning.

Misformation errors arose from limited understanding of English grammar, causing incorrect forms to appear in their writing. Meanwhile, misordering errors reflected difficulties in arranging words or phrases correctly, often influenced by patterns from their first language.

Causes of Errors

The causes of errors in students' narrative writing were analyzed using Norrish's (1983) framework, which categorizes errors into three main sources: Translation, L1 Interference, and Carelessness. As shown in the data, all five students exhibited Translation, L1 Interference, and Carelessness in varying level of dominants. Among these, L1 Interference appeared to be the most dominant factor, affecting every student, followed closely by Translation. Carelessness was almost influencing the writing of all the students, but some students not that dominant in carelessness. Some students, such as Student 1 and Student 6, demonstrated all three causes at the same time.

Table 2. Causes of Errors Analysis

Student Code	Translation	L1 Interference	Carelessness	Dominant Causes
Student 1	✓	✓	✓	All Causes
Student 6	✓	✓	✓	All Causes
Student 8	✓	✓	✓	L1 Interference
Student 12	✓	✓	✓	Translation + L1 Interference
Student 13	✓	✓	✓	Carelessness + L1 Interference

The most dominant cause of errors was L1 interference, as supported by the statements from five interviewed students. This finding aligned with Norrish (1983), who argued that learners often unconsciously applied first-language rules when using a second language, resulting in structural and grammatical errors. Several students admitted this influence. Student 1 stated, *“Yes, because I still followed Indonesian grammar when I wrote it,”* showing direct translation while maintaining Indonesian structure. Student 6 added, *“I thought it was correct because in Indonesian it sounded okay,”* indicating reliance on Indonesian sentence patterns for correctness judgment. Student 8 also noted, *“In my opinion, it was more fit in Indonesian grammar,”* proving Indonesian grammatical influence. Similarly, Student 12 said, *“At that*

time, I was just following how I would say it in Indonesian,” demonstrating translation based on native speaking habits. Student 13 acknowledged, *“Sometimes my word choices followed my Indonesian way of thinking, and that affected the final result,”* showing vocabulary choice influenced by Indonesian thinking patterns. These statements indicated that students frequently relied on Indonesian grammar unconsciously, confirming L1 interference as the dominant cause of their errors.

Translation also appeared as a cause of errors, although it was slightly less dominant than L1 interference. Student 1 admitted, *“Yes, this sentence just came to my mind, and I just changed it word by word to English,”* showing reliance on spontaneous word-for-word translation that led to grammatical or contextual errors. Similarly, Student 6

confirmed, *"Yes, I translated it in Indonesian form directly to English,"* indicating dependence on Indonesian structure when forming English sentences. Student 12 added, *"I did this repeatedly, because translating word for word felt faster,"* reflecting the intention to prioritize speed over accuracy. Meanwhile, Student 13 explained, *"In special occasions, I might do it for a few words because it's a fast way to get my idea out,"* indicating occasional use of direct translation only when needing to express ideas quickly. Likewise, Student 8 only partially used direct translations, showing effort to balance literal translation with English structure. These responses showed that translation was a frequent cause of errors for most students except Students 8 and 13, making it the second dominant factor after L1 interference.

Carelessness was also identified as a supporting factor contributing to writing errors. It appeared in all five students' writing, but was dominant only in Students 1, 6, and 13, while Students 8 and 12 were not included in the dominant category because they usually checked their writing after completing

it. Student 1 stated, *"No, I didn't check it carefully after writing. I easily got distracted if my friends talked to me while I was doing my writing,"* indicating carelessness influenced by environmental distractions. Similarly, Student 6 said, *"No, I didn't review, I just finished and left it. I liked to rush sometimes, so I didn't pay much attention,"* showing carelessness caused by rushing and skipping proofreading. Student 13 confirmed, *"No, I didn't really check my writing. When I was in a hurry, I tended to make errors like that,"* demonstrating errors caused by haste rather than lack of knowledge. In contrast, Student 8 mentioned doing a quick check, and Student 12 stated, *"Yes, I usually did. But sometimes I missed a small thing,"* indicating that carelessness played a minimal role for both of the students.

Writing Flow

The writing flow was analyzed by using three criteria: transition signals, use of compound sentences, and three-comma rules (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). The results, shown in Table 3, indicate that 13 students (37.15%) used correct transition signals, while 12 of 15 students (34.28%) applied compound

sentences in their narrative paragraphs. However, only 10 students (28.57%) adhered to the three-comma rules, while the other 5 students did not apply the three-comma rules correctly.

Table 3. Writing Flow Analysis

Student Code	Transition Signals	Compound Sentence	Three-Comma Rules
Student 1	✓	✓	✓
Student 2	✓	✓	✓
Student 3	✓	✓	X
Student 4	✓	X	✓
Student 5	✓	✓	✓
Student 6	X	✓	X
Student 7	X	X	✓
Student 8	✓	✓	✓
Student 9	✓	✓	X
Student 10	✓	✓	X
Student 11	✓	X	X
Student 12	✓	✓	✓
Student 13	✓	✓	✓
Student 14	✓	✓	✓
Student 15	✓	✓	✓

Thirteen out of fifteen students (37.15%) used time sequence signals correctly, ensuring that their narrative paragraphs flowed chronologically. These 13 students were identified as effectively using these signals to guide readers through the sequence of events in their stories, making the narratives easy to follow. However, two students Student 6 and Student 7

showed inconsistent use or even no use of these signals at all, which slightly or strongly reduced the cohesion of their paragraphs. For a clearer explanation, the example below shows examples of paragraphs that use transition signals effectively and those that omit the use of transition signals in their narrative paragraph.

➤ **Example of the correct use of transition signals in narrative paragraph (Student 9):**

- 1.) When we got there, I ran onto the warm sand, feeling it between my toes and listening to the waves crashing.
- 2.) After that, we played in the water, laughing as we tried to catch the waves.
- 3.) When the sunset came, turning the sky orange and pink, we sat around a small bonfire, roasting marshmallows and telling stories.

➤ **Example of omitted transition signals in their narrative paragraph (Student 7):**

- 1.) Grandma always sat on the veranda of the house, reading fairy tales before I went to sleep.
- 2.) These memories became the foundation for my imagination and made me become a more sensitive person.

Furthermore, almost all students have a sufficient understanding of the use of compound sentences. Twelve out of 15 students (34.28%) successfully combined ideas in the well-structured sentences. However, 3

students; Student 4, Student 7, and Student 11 showed weaknesses in this aspect, resulting a narrative paragraph that appeared less cohesive and engaging, as the lack of compound sentences reduced the effectiveness of idea and the overall readability. A common feature observed among the three students is their tendency to employ simple or complex sentences in constructing their narrative paragraph. The example below showed paragraphs from the students that indicate they did not use compound sentences.

➤ **(Student 7 Narrative Paragraph):** Grandma always sat on the veranda of the house, reading fairy tales before I went to sleep. Her gentle voice took me to a fantasy world full of magic. From her stories, I learned a lot about kindness, courage and the meaning of life. These memories became the foundation for my imagination and made me become a more sensitive person.

➤ **(Student 11 Narrative Paragraph):** I am one of the students from a favorite school in my city. Every day, my

schedule at school is very busy. After the bell rings at my school, it is only at 07.00 but I make it a habit to wake up every day at 04.00 so as not to be in a hurry.

Moreover, the most common weakness identified was in the application of the three-comma rules. Only ten of the 15 students (28.57%) consistently followed this rules, while five students; Student 3, Student 6, Student 9, Student 10, and Student 11 did not apply it correctly. For example, Student 3 applied comma to separate two phrases in a simple sentence. Another example, Student 6 omitted the comma placement after a time signal placed at the beginning of a sentence, which all this case was considered incorrect of the three-comma rules.

- **(Student 3):** "When I got the drink, I was looking for, I paid for it..."
- **(Student 6):** "Then the next morning I had breakfast at the hotel and walked while looking at the cool morning view."

The analysis of 15 students showed that most of them had a strong command of time order signals and compound sentences, which are

crucial elements for creating a clear and cohesive narrative flow. Although most successfully applied these two aspects, a major weakness was identified in the use of the three-comma rules, with nearly one-third of students not applying it correctly. This shows that while students are able to organize ideas and sequence events, their understanding of correct punctuation usage still requires further attention and practice.

The findings of this study provided key insights into the types and causes of errors and the writing flow in students' narrative paragraphs.

The error analysis showed that misformation and addition errors were the most dominant, followed by omission and misordering. Based on Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982) taxonomy, these errors appeared because students attempted to apply English rules without fully mastering them. This result supported Ma'mun (2016) and Maghfira & Hastini (2024), who also reported misformation as the most frequent error, while contrasting with Haryadi & Putra (2018) and Pasaribu (2021), who found omission more common. This variation indicated that error patterns depended on learners' proficiency and context,

consistent with Dulay et al.'s (1982) view that such errors were part of second language acquisition.

Regarding the causes of errors, the findings followed Norrish's (1983) classification, which includes L1 interference, translation, and carelessness. L1 interference emerged as the most dominant cause, supporting Pasaribu (2021) and Ma'mun (2016), while translation also contributed significantly, echoing Putra (2018), who noted that literal translation led to structural errors. Carelessness appeared less dominant but still relevant, aligning with Holidazia et al. (2016), suggesting that performance factors such as time pressure or distraction also affected accuracy.

In terms of writing flow, the study found that students demonstrated a fairly good understanding of transition signals, compound sentences, and comma usage as proposed by Oshima and Hogue (2007). Thirteen students successfully used transition signals, twelve effectively employed compound sentences, and ten correctly applied comma rules. These results indicated that most students-maintained coherence and logical sequencing, although a few still

struggled with punctuation and sentence variety.

The effective use of transition signals supported findings by Mahendra & Dewi (2017), who emphasized their role in guiding readers through narrative events. Conversely, the lack of transitions in two students' work led to less coherent narratives, in line with Oshima and Hogue's (2007) view that missing transitions disrupt readability. The use of compound sentences confirmed Sari et al. (2019), who stated that combining ideas enhances fluency, although some students still misused conjunctions, resulting in fragmented structures. Comma usage remained the most challenging aspect, as only ten students applied comma rules accurately, supporting Amelia et al. (2018), who found that students often misplace or omit commas. Consistent with Oshima and Hogue (2007), improper punctuation affected clarity and rhythm.

E. Conclusion

This study investigated students' narrative paragraph writing by examining the types and causes of errors as well as the flow of their writing. The analysis revealed that students made four types of errors

based on Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982) taxonomy omission, addition, misformation, and misordering with misformation and addition errors being the most frequent. These results suggest that students still face challenges in applying correct grammatical forms and tend to include unnecessary elements in their sentences. Based on Norrish's (1983) framework, the main causes of these errors were L1 interference, translation, and carelessness, indicating that students' writing difficulties are influenced by both linguistic competence and performance factors, particularly the strong influence of Indonesian grammar and limited proofreading skills. Furthermore, while most students demonstrated an adequate understanding of narrative flow through the use of transition signals and compound sentences, issues with mechanical accuracy especially in the use of the three-comma rules remained evident. Overall, the findings highlight that students can produce coherent narratives but need further development in grammatical accuracy and writing mechanics to enhance the overall quality of their English writing.

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