

AN ERROR ANALYSIS ON THE USE OF SIMPLE PAST TENSE IN NARRATIVE TEXT MADE BY SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the errors made by senior high school students in applying the simple past tense within narrative texts. The research employed a descriptive method. The participants were first-grade students at MAN 1 Lamongan, with a sample of 24 students selected from eight different classes. Data were collected through students' written assignments. The analysis revealed a total of 98 errors, which were categorized according to the surface strategy taxonomy. These included 76 omission errors, 3 addition errors, 15 misformation errors, and 3 misordering errors. The most frequent error type was omission, accounting for 80% of all errors. This was followed by misformation at 14%, and both addition and misordering at 3% each. The findings suggest that first-grade students at MAN 1 Lamongan encounter significant difficulties in constructing narrative texts accurately, particularly in using the simple past tense. It is hoped that this study will serve as a helpful reference for future researchers interested in exploring grammatical errors from different perspectives.

Keywords: Error analysis; narrative text, simple text

INTRODUCTION

Error is when students do something wrong because students do not understand what is the correct (Apriyanti & Nurdini, 2021). Errors are an expected and integral part of the English language learning process. A significant number of errors in students' writing can be attributed to their insufficient grasp of English grammatical structures. Learning a second language is a process that is distinctly different from learning a first language through trial and error (Brown, 2008). Nearly all students make mistakes while learning English, including errors that can be difficult to detect. These mistakes are valuable indicators of what students have already learned and what areas still require improvement. The simple past tense is a verb form used to describe actions or events that took place in the past. The past can be a long time ago, a few years ago, a few months ago, a few weeks ago, a day ago, or even a few hours ago. Student mistakes are a very useful tool to show what students have learned and what they haven't learned According to (Abdullah Syukur & Ardhy Supraba, 2022). To understand the learning process, it is important to study mistakes. Learner error

surveys describe what problems learners are currently having and help teachers plan corrective actions.

In particular, errors in the use of verb tenses—such as the simple past—can significantly hinder students' ability to write effectively, especially in genres that rely on chronological sequences like narrative texts. Writing, being a productive language skill, plays a significant role in second language learning. Through writing, a person can share their thoughts and feelings in a way that makes sense to others as well as to themselves. (Seruni, 2023). Since writing is a productive skill commonly used to express ideas and interact with others—alongside speaking—it can be concluded that writing plays a vital role in students' English language learning. Writing is one of the four essential language skills in English. It plays a significant role as it allows individuals to express their thoughts on paper and helps in preserving ideas after reading information (Kartini, 2022). Writing is a crucial academic skill for students, comparable in importance to listening, speaking, and reading. It enables them to convey their thoughts and intentions through written language. For learners, particularly those acquiring a second language, strong writing skills significantly influence their academic and personal development. Writing is not an innate ability and can only be developed through consistent learning and practice, requiring dedicated effort to master (Aditya, 2020).

Among various types of texts taught in English classrooms, narrative texts are particularly relevant in the context of this study. The focus of this study is on narrative text. Storytelling is a genre that typically employs the simple past tense. Narrative text refers to writing that recounts a series of events that occurred within a particular timeframe. Narratives are not limited to fictional works; they can also be used in scientific writing to present information in a story-like structure (Ade Fitria et al., 2022). A narrative is a recounting of a real or imaginary event, or a series of related events (Pardosi et al., 2019). When writing narrative texts, students should pay attention to the simple past tense, as it is written with past tense verbs. In this context, the simple past tense plays a crucial role in narrative writing. Writing is often used as a tool to assess students' understanding of a subject in school. Encouraging students to write narratives helps foster their interest and motivation to engage more in writing activities.

There are language rules that need to be followed to communicate properly. English tenses play a crucial role in the language, as they indicate the timing of events or actions described in a sentence. The use of tense shows when something happens and is typically marked by changes in the verb form. Tenses are part of grammar, and their function is to explain coincidences that have

occurred in history (Manurung & Daulay, 2020). Tense functions help determine when an event occurs, whether in the present, past, or future. "When we talk about grammar, we cannot separate it from tense. Tense has several functions: firstly, the occurrence of an action in the present, past, and future tenses, and secondly, whether it is really whether it is an imperfect tense, i.e. the state of the sentence; thirdly, whether an event or action is being performed; the past tense is used to express an action that occurred in the past but is not currently occurring; It is important for people who want to talk about the past, which has nothing to do with the future" (Ade Fitria et al., 2022).

Tense, as a crucial component of grammar, helps convey the time frame of an action—whether in the past, present. One of the aspects of grammar is the tenses (Situmorang et al., 2018). Tense plays a very important role when writing and speaking in English. English has various tenses. The difference arises from the form of the verb used and when the verb becomes effective. According to Azar (2003), there are twelve different verb tenses in English. Among them, the simple past and perfect tenses often present challenges for ESL learners globally. The simple past tense is used to express actions that took place at a definite time in the past, which may be signaled by time indicators such as yesterday or last year, or understood through context. Regular verbs form the past tense by adding -ed to the base verb, or -d if the verb ends in -e. In contrast, irregular verbs follow different patterns. Importantly, the verb form does not change based on the subject.

Several investigations related to this research have been conducted by three researchers. Summaries of these studies are elucidated in the subsequent section. The first is (Amir Hamzah, 2023), in his journal "Grammatical Error of Simple Past Tense in Narrative Text at Student's Economy Syariah". A case study was conducted on students' mistakes in learning tenses, especially in the use of simple past tenses. This study aims to examine grammatical errors related to the use of the simple past tense in narrative writing by second-semester students majoring in Economics and Sharia at the Islamic Religious University Syaichona Moh. Cholil Bangkalan. To gather data, the researcher employed both tests and questionnaires. A quantitative approach was selected, as the researcher intended to measure the frequency of tense-related errors. The second is (Kartini, 2022), in her journal "Error Analysis on The Use Simple Past Tense in Narrative Text". Conduct a case study to analyze the mistakes students make when writing narrative paragraphs. The purpose of this study is to analyze students' mistakes in using past tense in narrative texts. This addresses the issue that students felt confused about using the past tense in writing, especially narrative writing. Their research method is qualitative and descriptive. The subject researcher selects her 8th-grade students (2016/2017) in Darussalam Mountains, Sep Island. To collect data for the study, the researcher

worked with an English teacher to administer a narrative writing test to the students. The results show that researchers found errors of four types: omissions, additions, misformation, and misordering. Researchers then found that the biggest mistake students made was giving incorrect information 52% of the percentages. The last is (Apriyanti & Nurdini, 2021), in their journal “Error Analysis on Using Simple Past Tense in Diary Writing Made by EFL Student”. They conducted a case study on errors in diary writing. The purpose of this study is to analyse simple past tense in EFL students' diary writing. There are four specific key English skills that students should learn. These are speaking, writing, reading, and listening. In this study, the author uses a descriptive method. The data for this study came from an assignment in which EFL students were asked to write in a diary.

Based on the previous studies mentioned, there are both similarities and differences when compared to the current research. The similarities lie in the fact that all the earlier studies focused on analysing students' errors in using the simple past tense, and most of them applied the same theoretical framework by Dulay et al. Additionally, the second study also examined students' writing as the primary data source. There are some differences, in the first previous study used a quantitative method, in the third previous study was an analysis of diary writing made by EFL students.

To address this issue, the researcher believes that conducting an error analysis is a practical and effective way to help students recognize their difficulties and avoid making repeated errors. By analysing their writing, teachers and students can better understand which grammatical aspects need reinforcement.

METHOD

There are many kinds of research methods, one of them is qualitative as used in this study. The researcher used the descriptive qualitative method because this study aims to understand the meaning of individuals or groups facing social or humanitarian problems, (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The study wanted to describe the kinds of errors and dominant errors that are made by the students' writing. In addition, the purpose of qualitative analysis is for researchers to investigate the subject of research to find solutions to phenomena occurring in society.

The primary instrument used in this study was the students' worksheets. In this process, the researcher provided three story topics: *The Mouse Deer Stole the Cucumber*, *Deer and Farmer*, and *Turtle and Rabbit*. Students were instructed to select one of these topics and write a narrative text

based on their choice. Worksheets were chosen as the research instrument because they encourage students to structure their thoughts and articulate them using their own language. The researcher analysed the worksheets by reviewing and taking notes on the students' written work.

In qualitative research data analysis is done inductively and students as a tool in the data retrieval process. The data analysis process begins with data reduction, presentation of data, and conclusion (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Data reduction, involves selecting samples, identifying and categorizing errors, describing those errors, and then explaining them. This process helps present the data more clearly and allows the researcher to manage and analyse it more effectively. To examine the types of errors, the researcher applied a percentage-based analysis technique. The Formula used by (Sudjana 1997: 4):

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where:

P = percentage of the error

F = frequency of the error

N= total error

Displays data that has been collected and summarized into one to assist in drawing data conclusions. That is the process of concluding research results data collection and verifying that the results are supported by the data collected and analysed. Data collection techniques in this study only use documentation. The documentation was obtained from the result of the student's worksheet on narrative text, which was used as the primary source in this study before analysing data. The data will be taken from the product of students' writing on narrative text. The researcher asks the students to write narrative text as an assignment then the results of the student's writing will be analysed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Kinds of Error on the Use of Simple Past Tense

Once the data had been gathered, the researcher examined it by identifying and underlining the error items. These errors were then categorized according to their types. The students' written

work was analysed and grouped based on the error classifications proposed by Dullay et al (1982). The result of the error or kinds of error students' writing can be seen in the table below:

Table 1.
Result of Error in Using Simple Past Tense made by the Students

| No | Error Identifications | Types of Error | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|----------------|--------------|----------|-------------|
| | | Omission | Misformation | Addition | Misordering |
| 1 | To see | ✓ | | | |
| 2 | To keep | ✓ | | | |
| 3 | To replace | ✓ | | | |
| 4 | Mouse deer run | ✓ | | | |
| 5 | Him Confess | ✓ | | | |
| 6 | They taste delicious | ✓ | | | |
| 7 | Can enjoy the fruit | ✓ | | | |
| 8 | Looking for it | ✓ | | | |
| 9 | Crocodiles line up | ✓ | | | |
| 10 | Mouse deer takes the fruit | ✓ | | | |
| 11 | Jumping on the crocodiles | ✓ | | | |
| 12 | Carrying the fruit | ✓ | | | |
| 13 | Fast running | ✓ | | | |
| 14 | Hearing about the challenge | ✓ | | | |
| 15 | To watch the race | ✓ | | | |
| 16 | Run faster | ✓ | | | |
| 17 | To see | ✓ | | | |
| 18 | Rabbit run very fast | ✓ | | | |
| 19 | Win the challenge | ✓ | | | |
| 20 | To invite | ✓ | | | |
| 21 | To run | ✓ | | | |
| 22 | Overtaken | ✓ | | | |
| 23 | Without realizing | ✓ | | | |
| 24 | Stronger in running | ✓ | | | |
| 25 | To run faster | ✓ | | | |
| 26 | Participating | ✓ | | | |
| 27 | This running | ✓ | | | |
| 28 | When approaching | ✓ | | | |
| 29 | To catch | ✓ | | | |
| 30 | To challenge | ✓ | | | |
| 31 | Hearing about | ✓ | | | |
| 32 | The challenge | ✓ | | | |
| 33 | To watch | ✓ | | | |
| 34 | Leaving tortoise | ✓ | | | |
| 35 | After running | ✓ | | | |
| 36 | Of losing | ✓ | | | |
| 37 | Hoping that | ✓ | | | |
| 38 | The rabbit Run | ✓ | | | |
| 39 | Taking a short | ✓ | | | |
| 40 | Will give gifts | ✓ | | | |
| 41 | The turtle run slowly | ✓ | | | |
| 42 | Prepare enough | ✓ | | | |
| 43 | And eating the fruit | ✓ | | | |
| 44 | Mouse deer walking | ✓ | | | |
| 45 | Look for food | ✓ | | | |
| 46 | Stealing cucumber | ✓ | | | |
| 47 | Harvesting the cucumber | ✓ | | | |
| 48 | Without stopping | ✓ | | | |

| | | |
|--------------|--|-----------|
| 49 | He sleep | ✓ |
| 50 | Exciting to take this part | ✓ |
| 51 | Rabbit was known | ✓ |
| 52 | To catch | ✓ |
| 53 | To help him | ✓ |
| 54 | Call his friend | ✓ |
| 55 | Riding the crocodiles | ✓ |
| 56 | Arriving at the river | ✓ |
| 57 | To help him | ✓ |
| 58 | Call his friend | ✓ |
| 59 | Riding the crocodiles | ✓ |
| 60 | Arriving at the river | ✓ |
| 61 | Run away | ✓ |
| 62 | mouse deer walking | ✓ |
| 63 | To catch him | ✓ |
| 64 | Looking at the bright sun | ✓ |
| 65 | Arriving at the edge | ✓ |
| 66 | Waiting for a long | ✓ |
| 67 | Approach one of the crocodile | ✓ |
| 68 | A broken fence | ✓ |
| 69 | Had fallen | ✓ |
| 70 | Stealing the cucumber | ✓ |
| 71 | Mouse deer walking by the river | ✓ |
| 72 | He run quickly | ✓ |
| 73 | He was enjoy | ✓ |
| 74 | See the turtle | ✓ |
| 75 | Take a short | ✓ |
| 76 | Sleep longer | ✓ |
| Total | | 76 |
| 1 | He is enjoy | ✓ |
| 2 | Crocodile have divide | ✓ |
| 3 | Rabbit are know | ✓ |
| 4 | The hare also have an idea | ✓ |
| 5 | He have an idea | ✓ |
| 6 | The turtle were excited | ✓ |
| 7 | Tortoise is the winner | ✓ |
| 8 | He were asleep | ✓ |
| 9 | The tortoise is the winner | ✓ |
| 10 | Had been prepare | ✓ |
| 11 | There is a tortoise | ✓ |
| 12 | They have collect | ✓ |
| 13 | Deer's action are very cunning | ✓ |
| 14 | Had been lay | ✓ |
| 15 | His leg is stuck | ✓ |
| Total | | 15 |
| 1 | Couldn't caught | ✓ |
| 2 | Didn't went to river | ✓ |
| 3 | Interested in it | ✓ |
| Total | | 3 |
| 1 | They to wanted see | ✓ |
| 2 | The king to would give gift crocodile | ✓ |
| 3 | Looked for food he want | ✓ |
| Total | | 3 |

The following table presents a complete summary of the types of errors made by senior high school students in their narrative texts, specifically related to the use of the simple past tense. From the analysis, the researcher found a total of 97 errors, consisting of 76 omission errors, 3 addition errors, 15 misformation errors, and 3 misordering errors. This table highlights the error types and their frequency as produced by students at MAN 1 Lamongan.

Student 1: One type of error identified in the students' writing was omission, with four error sentences observed. For example, the sentence "Mouse deer run in the jungle" is classified as an omission error because the verb is in the wrong form; it should be "Mouse deer ran in the jungle." Another example is the phrase "To replace him," where the student failed to use the correct verb form and omitted the appropriate verb inflection—it should be "To replaced him." In the phrase "to see her range," the correct past form should be "to saw her range." Lastly, the sentence "he confesses to her" should have been written as "he confessed to her."

Student 2: The student produced two types of grammatical errors: omission and misformation. An example of an omission error is the sentence "to keep the garden," which should be "to kept the garden." Similarly, "They taste the food" should be corrected to "They tasted the food," where the student failed to include the -ed verb inflection. On the other hand, a misformation error is seen in the sentence "he is enjoy," which should be "he was enjoy." In this case, the student used incorrect verb forms in the sentence construction.

Student 3: The sentence constructions produced by the student fall under omission and misordering errors. For instance, "tini's parents agree with their relation" should be corrected to "Tini's parents agreed with their relation"—indicating an omission of the past tense verb form. Similarly, "Enjoy the fruit" should be "Enjoyed the fruit." Another example of misordering is "they to wanted see the match," which should be rearranged to "they wanted to see the match."

Student 4: Two types of errors were identified in the student's writing. The phrase "Stealing the cucumber" is categorized as an omission error because the verb form used is incorrect; it should be "stolen the cucumber." Another example involves a misordering error in the sentence "the king would to give gift crocodile." The correct construction should be "the king would give a gift to the crocodile."

Student 5: The student's writing contained two types of errors: omission and misordering. The phrase "Stealing the cucumber" is considered an omission error due to the incorrect use of verb form; the correct version should be "stolen the cucumber." Another example is the sentence "the

king would to give gift crocodile," which reflects a misordering error. The appropriate structure should be "the king would give a gift to the crocodile."

2. The Dominant Error on the Use of Simple Past Tense

The table presents the percentage distribution of each type of error related to the use of the simple past tense in narrative texts written by students. It highlights the frequency of errors made by senior high school students. The most frequent error was omission, accounting for 80% of the total errors. This was followed by misformation errors at 14%, while addition and misordering errors each represented 3% of the total. Based on these findings, the researcher concluded that omission was the most dominant error type in students' narrative writing, particularly among first-grade students at MAN 1 Lamongan.

Table 2.
The Percentage of Error in using Simple Past Tense

| No | Kinds of Error | Percentage |
|----|----------------|------------|
| 1 | Omission | 80% |
| 2 | Addition | 3% |
| 3 | Misformation | 14% |
| 4 | Misodering | 3% |
| | Total | 100% |

Discussion

The researcher found various errors made by Senior High School Students at MAN 1 Lamongan. The errors also related to Dulay's theory. The errors were:

a. Omission

This type of error happened when students failed to include elements that are essential for constructing grammatically correct sentences. In their narrative writing, students often left out certain words, resulting in incomplete sentences. A total of 83 omission errors (80%) were identified, which included: 1) omission of verbs, 2) omission of to be, and 3) omission of the regular past tense marker -ed. Among these, the most frequent mistake was the omission of the -ed ending in regular past tense verbs. For example:

- *To Replace It should be To Replaced*
- *Mouse Deer is Walked It should be Mouse Deer was Walked*
- *Arriving at the river It should be arrived at the river*

b. Addition

This type of error arose when students included elements that should not be present in a grammatically correct sentence. The students made mistakes by inserting unnecessary components in one or more parts of the sentence. A total of 3 addition errors (3%) were identified, where students marked two verbs in the same sentence as past tense, resulting in double marking. For example:

- *He didn't went to river **It should be** He didn't go to the river*
- *Couldn't caught **It should be** Couldn't catch*
- *Interested in it **It should be** Interested it*

c. Misformation

This type of error happened when students applied an incorrect form of a morpheme or grammatical structure. They used improper grammar in one or more parts of a sentence. A total of 15 misformation errors (14%) were identified, with the majority involving the incorrect use of to be forms. For example:

- *The turtle were excited **It should be** The turtle was excited*
- *They have collected **It should be** They had collected*
- *He have an idea **It should be** He has an idea*

d. Misordering

This type of error took place when students arranged morphemes or groups of morphemes incorrectly within a sentence. Although all the necessary elements were present, their order was not appropriate. In the students' narrative texts, 3 instances (3%) of misordering errors were identified, which were classified as follows:

- *He to wanted see **it should be** He wanted to see*
- *The king to would give gift crocodile **it should be** The king would give gift to crocodile*
- *looked for food he want **it should be** Looked for food that he want*

In the results, the researcher determined the percentage of each error type found in students' narrative writings related to the simple past tense. The analysis showed that omission errors were the most common, especially those involving the exclusion of irregular verbs in their past tense forms.

Furthermore, the analysis indicated that many students struggled with applying the simple past tense correctly, especially when using the past form of verbs and the appropriate form of to be. Although narrative texts require the use of verb form 2 (past tense), many students failed to do so. For instance, in the phrase “to replace him,” several students used present tense verbs instead of the correct past tense form. This suggests that the students lacked understanding of how to use the simple past tense and were unfamiliar with its grammatical rules.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and analysis outlined in the previous chapter, the researcher arrives at the following conclusions: The types of errors found in the use of simple past tense in narrative texts written by Senior High School students at MAN 1 Lamongan include 76 omission errors (80%), 3 addition errors (3%), 15 misinformation errors (14%), and 3 misordering errors (3%). These errors occurred primarily because students lacked knowledge of how to properly use the simple past tense.

According to the data in the findings, the most common error made by the students was omission, with 76 instances, accounting for 80% of all errors. This type of error proved to be the most challenging for students, largely due to their limited understanding of verb changes from the base form to the past tense. Finally, This study is expected to be a valuable resource for future researchers who wish to examine grammatical errors from various angles, as well as to inspire further research on effective instructional methods for enhancing students’ understanding of English tenses.

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