

## Error Analysis on The Use of Simple Past Tense among The Second Year Students of SMP Inshafuddin Banda Aceh

Endah Anisa Rahma<sup>1</sup>

Muhammad Gustian Safrilla<sup>2</sup>

Jusnaini Hasni<sup>3</sup>

Ana Elvia Jakfar<sup>4</sup>

Refanjarahmatillah<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Teuku Umar, Faculty of Fishery and Marine Science

<sup>2</sup>SMA IT Nurul Fikri Banda Aceh

<sup>3</sup>Universitas Teuku Umar, Faculty of Economics

<sup>4</sup>Universitas Teuku Umar, Faculty of Engineering

<sup>5</sup>Universitas Teuku Umar, Faculty of Agriculture

Email: [endahanisarahma@utu.ac.id](mailto:endahanisarahma@utu.ac.id), [gustian4egs@gmail.com](mailto:gustian4egs@gmail.com), [jusnainihasni@utu.ac.id](mailto:jusnainihasni@utu.ac.id),  
[anaelvia@utu.ac.id](mailto:anaelvia@utu.ac.id), [refanjarahmatillah@utu.ac.id](mailto:refanjarahmatillah@utu.ac.id)

Author Correspondence: [endahanisarahma@utu.ac.id](mailto:endahanisarahma@utu.ac.id)

### ABSTRAK

*Tense adalah bagian dari unit tata bahasa yang harus dikuasai oleh pelajar L2. Bagi beberapa pelajar L2, simple past tense dianggap sebagai tense yang menantang untuk dipelajari. Masalah ini dapat dilihat pada tes yang diberikan kepada siswa di SMP Inshafuddin Banda Aceh. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui kesalahan umum (common error) yang dilakukan oleh siswa kelas dua dan mendeskripsikan frekuensi error yang terjadi dilakukan siswa dalam penggunaan simple present di SMP Inshafuddin Banda Aceh. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian deskriptif kualitatif dan deskriptif kuantitatif serta menggunakan teknik purposive sampling untuk mengumpulkan data. Terdapat 45 siswa kelas dua SMP Inshafuddin Banda Aceh yang berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Data dikumpulkan dengan memberikan tes menulis kepada siswa. Ada dua jenis tes; identifikasi dan identifikasi error. Selanjutnya, data yang terkumpul dianalisis dengan membentuk rekonstruksi koreksi kalimat dalam bahasa target; mengidentifikasi error, dan mengklasifikasikan error. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa error paling umum yang dilakukan oleh siswa dalam penggunaan simple past tense adalah misformation. Sementara itu, frekuensi error dalam penggunaan simple past tense menunjukkan bahwa jenis error yang paling umum adalah error misformation. Dua jenis error yang diidentifikasi sebagai item yang paling sulit adalah error of addition dan error of misformation di mana jenis ini dikategorikan sebagai "cukup". Sementara itu, error of omission dan error of misordering dikategorikan sebagai "baik".*

**Kata Kunci:** Error Analysis; Simple Past Tense.

### ABSTRACT

*Tense is a part of grammar unit that must be mastered by L2 learners. For some L2 learners, the simple past tense is considered as a challenging tense to learn. This issue can be seen on the test given to the students at SMP Inshafuddin Banda Aceh. Hence, this study aimed to find out the common errors produced by second-year students and errors described on the frequency occurrence of the errors made among students on the use of simple present at SMP Inshafuddin Banda Aceh. The study used descriptive qualitative and descriptive quantitative research methods and employed purposive sampling technique to collect the data. There were 45 second-year students of SMP Inshafuddin Banda Aceh participated in the study. The data was collected by giving a writing test to the students. There were two types of the test; identification and identification of errors. Next, the*

*data collected was analyzed by forming a reconstruction of sentence correction in the target language; identifying the errors, and classifying the errors. The findings of the study presented that the most common error made by students on the use of simple past tense is misformation. Meanwhile, the frequency of errors on the use of simple past tense shows that the most common error types are on the error of misformation. Two types of errors identified as the most difficult items are errors of addition and errors of misformation where these types were categorized as "fair". Meanwhile, errors of omission and errors of misordering were categorized as "good".*

**Key words:** *Error Analysis; Simple Past Tense.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Grammar is one of English Language units that must be learnt and understood by someone who learns English. It is a science that teaches students how the way to speak, to read, and to write English correctly. Grammar is the science which treats of the principles of languages such as the study of forms of speech and their relations to one another, the art concerned with the right use and application of the rules of language in speaking or writing. So, it is no doubt that by mastering grammar, the students will have a way to be able to speak, to read and to write English correctly and understandable, so finally the students can create a good communication and interaction in English language actively both in oral and written English.

Simple Past tense started learnt by students since Junior High School. Simple past tense is the form of a verb used to describe an action which happened before present time and no longer happening. The simple past tense refers to action which occurred at a specific time in the past, completed action, and past status. According to Azar (1992), the past tense is used to talk about activities or situations that began and ended at a particular time in the past. In simple past, the form can be known by its verb, linking verb (to be), and adverb of time.

In writing skill, students have to master not only vocabulary but also grammar well. Grammar is essential as the rules of wording to make meaningful utterances. Pence and Emery (1965) said that grammar is the science of

language that treats of the constructions, forms and usage of words. In this case, verb tenses have essential roles, because they tell readers when actions are taking place. For instance, if the verbs in a passage refer to actions occurring at past actions, then the past tense is definitely needed to be used.

For some students, the simple past tense is considered a difficult tense. It can be seen based on the test given to the students. The writes had given a test in a text and had asked them to fill the blank space with the correct words (the simple past tense features; linking verbs, main verbs, and adverbs of time). The result shows that most of students are still confused to answer the test. The students are confused about the change of verb forms and they are also confused about the adverb of time.

Based on the curriculum in Indonesia, writing skill is one of four skills in mastering English. In writing, students are hoped to be able to express many written meanings that have purposes in communicative, text structure, etc. To make a good composition in writing, the students must be able to master and apply the structure correctly, especially about tense used. If they cannot do that, errors will arise. Automatically their writing will cause misunderstanding for the readers, because the readers cannot receive the message or expression of their idea well. Most of students find problem problems in using it because of their difficulties in using regular and irregular verb.

English is not our mother language. So, the errors in using English are commonly occur. The errors also occur when students learn tenses. Many kinds of errors arise when the students learn to write, because they do not master the English structure well. The errors can be influenced by the first language which is different from the second language in written form. Since English is a foreign language in Indonesia, it can be seen that errors in learning second language are caused by the interference of the learners' mother tongue. In other words, errors made by learners sometimes are caused by the use of the first language.

When someone learns language, he usually makes mistakes. In relation to the second language learning, the usage of language rules which are out of Standard English called as the mistake or error. It gives the signal for teacher on how far the learners have understood the material given. The teacher's understanding about the students' difficulties may help teacher to find the better way to improve their method of teaching which will assist the students to develop their competency in learning English.

So, the writer interested to analyze the errors made by the students on the use of simple past tense. The classification of errors in comparative taxonomy is based on comparisons between the structure of L2 and certain other types of constructions. There are four types of errors in comparisons namely; developmental, inter-lingual, ambiguous, and other errors. Thus, the errors may be in the form of omission, addition, misformation, and misordering error types.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

There are many definitions of errors and mistakes. However, error and mistake are not in the same definition. Many experts defined differently what an error is based on their own concept. James (1981) defined error analysis as

a theory replacing the contrastive analysis, which was abandoned by linguists and teachers due to its ineffectivity and unreliability. Fromkin and Rodman (1978) state that the human brain is able not only to acquire and store the mental grammar, but also to access the linguistics store house and to speak and understand what is spoken. It means that we are against the grammatical rules and result in unacceptable utterances. In second language learning, they occur because the learner has not internalized the grammar of the second language.

Dulay in Brown (1987) used the term error to refer to any deviations from selected norm of language performances, and matter what the characteristics or causes of the definition might be. They also explain that the norm used to identify the errors may cause by the varieties of dialect and language the native speakers use.

Furthermore, there are distinction between errors, mistakes and lapses. Mistake arises when the speaker fails to match the language to the situation and result in appropriate utterances. In other word, it is caused by physical condition of the learner and they can correct it by themselves later. Corder (1981) claims that performances of mistakes are accessible to automatic self-correction and should not count as error. Mistake is not systematic and belongs to phenomena of performance.

Meanwhile, analysis means separation into parts possibly with comment and judgement. So, error analysis is an activity to reveal errors found. Richards (1991) said that error analysis is the study of errors made by the second and foreign language learners. Error analysis may be carried out in order to find out how well someone knows a language, to find out how a person learns a language and to obtain information on common difficulties in language learning.

In language learning, the study of the learners has become very important and has

always been a cause of much concern to the teacher and text-book writers alike. It has been used as indicator of learning and guide in teaching. The students' errors are known as error analysis. Error analysis shows the significance of learner's errors in three ways:

1. They tell the teachers how far the learners have progressed and what remains for them to learn;
2. They provide evidence to researcher of how language is learned or acquired and what strategy or procedure the learner is employing to learn the language;
3. They serve as feedback to the learner of hypothesis he is using.

To categorize error into classification based on the types or the source of errors is not easy work. The classification of errors in a Comparative taxonomy is based on comparison between the structures of L2 errors and certain other types of constructions. In this classification, L2 errors have most frequently been compared to errors made by a language learning, the target language as their first language and to equivalent phrases or sentences in the learner's mother tongue. There are some types of errors:

1. Omission

Omission error is characterized by the absence of an item that must appear in well-formed utterance. Although any morpheme or word in a sentence is a potential candidate for omission, but some types of morpheme are omitted more than others. In keeping with Daulay (1982), there are two types of morpheme within the sentences structure. The first type is content morphemes which carry the bulk of referential meaning of a sentence such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Another type of morpheme is grammatical morpheme which has no meaning if they stand alone.

2. Addition

The addition error is the opposite of omission error. Daulay (1982) stated that this error is characterized by the presence of an item that must not appear in a well formed utterances. This error is caused by the use of some rules which is too carefully formed. Actually, an addition error is a result of too faithful use of certain rules of language or over generalization. Moreover, there are three types of addition error, there are:

- a. Double marking

Double marking is characterized by the failed to omit some items needed in the linguistic construction. Example: He doesn't knows my name.

We didn't went there

- b. Regularization

Regularization is characterized by the use of regular form instead of the irregular one. For example : The childs are happy

- c. Simple Addition

Simple addition is all of the errors which cannot be categorized into double marking or regularization. In other word, it occurs if an addition error is neither a double marking nor regularization. Example: I likes chocolates. We stay in over there

3. Misformation

Misformation errors are characterized by the used of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure. In misformation error, the learner supplies something, although it is incorrect, example: The dog eated the chicken last night. I thought that she is married.

4. Misordering

This type of errors is characterized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morpheme in an utterance, example: She go downs.

Therefore, the writer conducted the research about what common errors the second

year students of SMP Inshafuddin Banda Aceh do and what errors are to be described on the frequency occurrence of the errors made among students on the use of simple present.

The objectives of this research are to describe what common errors made among students on the use of simple past tense and to describe the frequency occurrence of the errors made. Then, the result of the research is expected to give the explanation about the problems faced by the students on the use of simple past tense. Theoretically, the significances of this research will encourage the knowledge of students' difficulty in mastering simple past tense.

## **METHOD**

Both descriptive qualitative and descriptive quantitative are used in this research. The writer tried to conclude and explain about the problems based on the errors made by students. It was done to describe phenomena of a case by taking its data that was analyzed and generalized to the population of research sample. The research was intended to describe the reality found without giving any manipulation. It dealt with the use of simple past tense, analyzing the errors, which was focused on the phenomena of English simple past tense errors committed by the students.

The population of this research was all the students of the second year students of SMP Inshafuddin. The writer simply took all two classes as the sample of this research by using purposive sampling technique. In getting the data, the writer got it directly to the school and gave a test to produce their language in the form of written language through writing composition spontaneously in the class.

The technique of data collection used in this research was by giving a writing test to the students. There are two sections of the test. The first section, the writer asked the students to write a text about their activities on the last holiday. In section two, the writer gave a close

test. The writer asked the students to produce their language in the form of written language through writing the new form of sentence (changing the verb form, negative sentence, and interrogative sentence).

The data were the errors found in the sentences in students' writing. The data was analyzed based on the students' errors. All these errors are classified based on types of errors by Dulay (1982:150). There are two steps of analyzing the students' errors, namely the identification and description of errors. The identification of errors means to recognize the students' errors by finding out what the students have made, and then describe and difference among them. After identifying the errors, the total number of errors made by students was counted 1 (one) for each errors.

After identification of the errors, the writer formed a reconstruction of sentence correction in the target language. Meaning that, the writer compared the original sentences and finally described the differences. It was done to compare the right sentences with the students' wrong sentences and also to indicate to which types the errors belong. The researcher tried to find which aspects of English simple past tense that will be more difficult for students.

## **RESULTS**

### **Errors Committed by Students**

The study was conducted in two sections, the test given to the students and writing of the students according to the topic given by the researcher. The total participants of this study was 45 students. The finding of this research shows that the most common errors made by students on the use of simple past tense are the misformation, These errors occur on the students' writing about the activities on the last holiday, errors in changing of the verb item, errors in negative sentence and errors in interrogative sentence. Next, the errors of addition are obtained as the second most common errors. The errors of addition are

commonly found on the changing the verb form.

While on students' writing, the frequency of errors on the use of simple past tense shows that the most common error types are on the error of misinformation, next the error of addition and the error of omission and the last is the error of misordering. The following chart shows the frequency of errors made by the female and male students on the use of simple past:

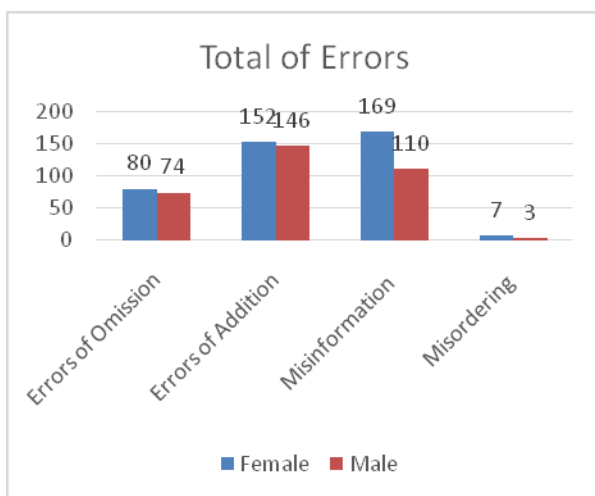


Figure 1. The Frequency of Errors Made by Female and Male Students

It was found from the data that the four types of error occurred. Thus, the analysis errors consisted of errors of omission, addition, misinformation and misordering. This analysis resulted in the most errors occurred among the female and male students were errors of addition and misinformation. Based on the students' work, it can be concluded that the errors of addition is the most common errors done by the students while the errors of misinformation the second one.

The writer did the analysis in identifying and classifying the errors based on their types. The analysis of the data was done by using some steps which include identifying the errors and classifying the errors based on students' work.

### Identifying the Errors

To distinguish between an error and mistakes, Ellis (2005) suggests two ways. The first one is to check the consistency of learners' performance. If the students sometimes use the correct form and sometimes the wrong one, it is a mistake. However, if the students always use it incorrectly, then it is an error. The second way is to ask learner to try to correct his own deviant utterances. If he is unable, it is errors. If he is successful, they are mistakes. Therefore, in this study the writer carefully analyzed the students' writing as errors. The writes did not take some items each students' answer sheet as the errors when the items were rewritten correctly in another section and number of items.

This analysis was done by identifying and counting the number of errors which appear in the students answer sheet. The test consists of two sections that was given to find out the students' errors on the use of simple past tense. The first test was students wrote about their activities on the last holiday. The second one was students changed the verb form and the affirmative sentence to negative and interrogative sentence. Then the writer identified the number of errors (wrong answer) made by the students for each sentence on the test as an integrated part of the description of the frequency of occurrence of the errors.

### Classifying the Errors

After identifying the students' answer as the errors, the classification the errors into error type was done based on the surface strategy taxonomy by Daulay (1982). In which errors can be described into four types, they are:

1. Errors of omission : the absence of an item test must appear in a well-farmed utterances.
2. Errors of addition: the presence of an item, which must not appear in a well-farmed utterance.

3. Errors of misformation: the use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure.
4. Errors of misordering the incorrect placement of a morpheme or a group of morpheme in an utterances.

It was found from the data that the four types of error occurred. Thus, the analysis of errors consisted of errors of omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. This analysis was done to compare the right sentences with the students' wrong sentences and also to indicate which types the errors must be classified.

After classifying the items, the writer describes the percentage of the students' errors in using simple past tense based on the types of errors.

Table 1. Percentage of students' errors

No	Type of errors	Number of Errors	Percentage of Errors
1	Omission	154	21%
2	Addition	298	40%
3	Misformation	279	38%
4	Misordering	10	1%
Total		741	100%

The table shows that all types of errors are found on the students' work. However, there are two types of errors which are identified as the most difficult item namely error of addition and errors of misformation. Both of these types are categorized as fair based on level of mastery on percentage 31% - 45%. Meanwhile, errors of omission and errors of misordering are categorized as the level of mastery good and very good with the percentage 21% and 1%. Based on the students work on the test, the writer can tell that the errors of addition are the most common errors done by the students while the errors of misformation is the second one.

The percentage of error types was calculated which aspects/ items of English simple past found to be more difficult than others. Thus, each item was identified as a difficult item based on the following terms of category of errors' mastery level:

Table 2. The Level Mastery of students' errors

No	Type of errors	Percentage of Errors	Level of Mastery
1	Omission	21%	Good
2	Addition	40%	Fair
3	Misformation	38%	Fair
4	Misordering	1%	Very Good
Total		100%	

Errors of omission commonly appear when student do not put something that must be put on the use of simple past tense. The most errors occur when the students write negative and interrogative sentence. They fail to put auxiliary "did not" in the sentence as the form of negative. While in the interrogative sentence, they do not only fail to put auxiliary sometimes but also fail to put the main verb of the sentences. The omissions of these characteristics in negative and interrogative sentences show that the second year students of SMP Inshafuddin Banda Aceh get much trouble in understanding.

Errors of addition in this study are found in two categories. They are double marking and regularization. The students put something which must not appear. It can be seen when they put auxiliary "was" in verbal sentence. They make this very often. For example, the students attempt to use two tense markers at the same time in one sentence since they have not mastered the language yet. When they wrote "he was entered the room", it is because the pronoun "he" always followed by the auxiliary "was" in nominal sentence not in verbal sentence.

Errors of misformation can be characterized by the use of the wrong form of

the morpheme of structure. In this study, the writer found that the students do not know the past form of the verb so that they supply the simple form of the verb in the sentence. From the percentage of the errors, it can be concluded that the students get the serious problem on changing the verb form.

Errors of misordering are found in students' answer sheet. They are found when the students attempt to change the sentences to negative and interrogative sentences. These errors are characterized by the incorrect placement of a group of morpheme in an utterance. These occur because the students place the auxiliary verb (was, were and did) after the subject or pronouns. In fact, the students do not understand the pattern of negative and interrogative sentences.

In this study, the errors made by the students can be discussed from the source of errors based on two terms of language transfer.

In these parts, the writer discusses some sources which can be the explanation of students' errors on the use of simple past tense.

The first one is called interlingual transfer. It is a significant source for language

learners. From the errors that the students made in this study, the writer can tell that they are affected by their first language which has no specific verb form for actions that happen in the past. For example from the students' writing, almost all the students frequently fail to change the verb „go” to the past form “went”. They write „last holiday, I and my family go to Medan”. This kind of sentence commonly found in the students' writing. However, this should not be confused with behaviourist approach of language transfer.

Error analysis does not regard them as the persistence of old habits, but rather as signs that the learner is internalizing and investigating the system of the new language. Interlingual errors may occur at different levels such as transfer of phonological, morphological, grammatical and lexica-

semantic elements of the native language into the target language.

The last one is Intralingual transfer. Interference from the students' own language is not the only reason for committing errors. Use of past tense suffix “ed” for all verbs is an example of simplification and over generalization. For example of students' work; „My father bought a new bag for me” and „Nico getted up at six o'clock this morning”. These errors are common in the speech of second language learners, irrespective of their mother tongue.

Intralingual errors result from faulty or partial learning of the target language rather than language transfer. They may be caused by the influence of one target language item upon another. For example, learners attempt to use two tense markers at the same time in one sentence since they have not mastered the language yet. When they say „we were went to Ujong Batee by car”, it is because the pronoun „we” needs auxiliary „were” for the past form in a sentence, but the students do not aware that the sentence is in verbal form. This shows that the students still do not aware that the sentence is in verbal form. This shows that the students still do not understand about form of nominal and verbal sentences. In short, intralingual errors occur as a result of learners' attempt to build up concepts and hypotheses about the target language from their limited experience with it. Learners may commit errors due to this reason in many ways.

This study has the objective to find out students difficulty on the use of simple past tense. From the data, most of the students make errors in changing the verb form. When they are asked to write about their past activities consequently the tense that is requested is past tense. Meanwhile, the students still do some errors in their writing. The writer can interpret that the second year students do many errors on the use of simple past tense because of their lack of knowledge



about this matter. It is also because some students have lack of vocabularies. Actually they do know what they have to write about their past experience in Indonesia, but when they are asked to write in English they find some difficulties in finding the appropriate word choice.

Based on the interview with the English teacher in the school, the writer find that the students still have problem in using simple past tense and do many errors were caused by their less enthusiasm and motivation. They have not understood yet the explanation given by the teacher. According to Dictionary of language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (1992) a learner makes a mistake when writing or speaking because of lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness, or some other aspects of performance. Mistakes can be self-corrected when attention is called. Whereas, an error is the use of linguistic item in a way that a fluent or native speaker of the language regards it as showing faulty or incomplete learning. In other words, it occurs because the learner does not know what is correct, and thus it cannot be self-corrected.

## **CONCLUSSION**

The data showed that most of the second year students of SMP Inshafuddin Banda Aceh made many errors in using simple past tense. From the data collected, all types of errors were found in students' test result. Two types of errors identified as the most difficult items are errors of addition and errors of misformation where both of these types were categorized as "fair". Meanwhile, errors of omission and errors of misordering were categorized at the level of "good". Therefore, the writer can tell that the error of addition is the most common errors done by the students while the error of misformation is the second one.

With regard to the result of the study, there are some suggestions that the writer

intends to offer; the students should give more concern and should understand very well how the changing of the verb in simple past tense both in regular and irregular. Next, the teachers should understand the sources of errors so they can provide appropriate remedy and create comfortable classroom which can attracts the students' enthusiasm and motivation in teaching-learning process.

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