

# ERRORS IN THE USE OF SIMPLE PAST TENSE COMMITTED BY EFL STUDENTS'

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## Abstract

This study discusses about type of errors are made by students and the causes of the students make errors in using the simple past tense. The objective of this study is to describe the type of errors made by students of using simple past tense and also to find out what causes of students to make errors in using the simple past tense. The design of this study was qualitative descriptive research. The research subject was eighth grade students of SMP Miftahul Ulum Rambipuji, it consisting of 28 students. The data was collected by using writing task, questionnaire, and interview. It was found that 3 kinds of errors are committed by the students. The three errors were omission with 20 errors, addition with 2 errors, and misformation with 386 errors. Based on analysis of questionnaire and interview, it was found that the causes of student making error were overgeneralization, false concept hypothesized, and ignorance of the rules' restrictions. Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the most types errors were committed by students is misformation error, and the causes of students in making error in the use of simple past tense were overgeneralization, ignorance of the rules' restrictions, and false concept hypothesized.

**Key Words:** Error, Simple past tense.

Grammar is an important part of a process of using language, both in written and spoken language, because grammar is used to interpret the structure of a language. Toago, et.al (2013) state that grammar is a set of structural rules that govern the structure of sentences, words and phrases in any natural language. For some Indonesian students, changing shapes and combining words into a sentence is not an easy thing. Syarif (2014) stated that they seem to have

difficulty mastering English grammar, especially about tenses.

Simple past tense is a tense that describes an event that happened in the past. According to Azar (1992) simple past tense is a sentence pattern in English that is used to talk about an activity or situation that started and ended in the past. However, students in Indonesia still have difficulty in using simple past tense, especially in determining sentence patterns and choosing verbs in the simple past tense. According to Mubasyira (2017) they often have difficulty in distinguishing between regular and irregular verbs in the

simple past tense. This can occur due to a lack of understanding and mastery of students towards grammar, resulting in errors.

According to Brown (2007) error is a marked deviation from the grammar of a native speaker's adult, which reflects the learner's interlingual competence. This means that the learners makes error because they lacks knowledge of the grammatical rules being studied. Error is a deviation from grammar made by students both in writing and speaking which usually occurs repeatedly.

In this research, describe the types of errors are made by students based on theories by Dulay, et.al (1982) namely: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering, and also find out what causes of students to make errors in using the simple past tense. The focus of this research is to provide information to teachers about students' errors in using the simple past tense, so the teachers can find the right solution in teaching English structure, especially about simple past tense.

## **METHOD**

This study used a qualitative descriptive research method, because this study describe the types of errors made by students

and the causes of students making error in using the simple past tense.

The instrument that used in this study are writing task, questionnaire, and interview. The writing task used to collect students' writing in the form of fill in the blank about recount text, that analysed the errors using the Surface Strategy Taxonomy, the questionnaire and interview was use to know the causes of students' errors in using simple past tense.

In this study, the researcher collected the data by asking the students to fill in the blank of recount text about "Holiday in Papuma Beach" and fill out the questionnaire, and interview students directly. This interview conducted one by one to the students.

After collecting the data, the researcher then analyzed the students' writing task used Carl James' data analysis technique (1998), It consists of five steps: error detection, error location, error description, error classification, and error counting. This study also used the Guttman scale to score the students' responses to the questionnaire's questions. For the interview, this study analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (1984) interactive analysis methodology. This analysis has three parts, they are data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Types of Errors**

Based on the theory from Dulay

(1982) there are four types of errors on the surface of the strategy taxonomy, there are omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. After analyzing the students' answer of the task administered, it was found some results of students' error in using simple past tense. The data findings on the types of students errors was based on the surface strategy taxonomy; omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. However, it was found that 3 kinds of errors are committed by the students. The three errors were omission, addition and misformation. The total number of errors was 408 errors. The most type of error made by the students in using simple past tense was misformation errors with 386 number of errors on the percentage 94.61%. The next was omission errors with 20 number of errors on the percentage 4.90%, and the last was addition errors with 2 number of errors on the percentage 0.49%. No misordering errors were found in students' answers. They did not make misordering errors that might be caused by the writing assignments that had been given, which limited students to answer more than one word, or only needed one correct word to answer. Students are basically asked to answer the blanks based on the instructions given.

### **Causes of Error**

According to Brown (2000) there are four sources of error, namely: interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, learning contexts, and communication strategies. But, in this research only focus on intralingual transfer. Richards (2002) says that intralingual transfer can be divided into 4 terms, namely: Ignorance of the rules' restrictions, overgeneralization, false concept hypothesized, and incomplete application of rules.

Based on the analysis from questionnaire, it was found that the causes of students making errors in the use of the simple past tense were overgeneralization, false concept hypothesized, and ignorance of the rules' restrictions. Overgeneralization is the most dominant cause of students in making errors, with a percentage of 51.79%. In this research, overgeneralization occurs when students generalize the rules for using regular and irregular verb in simple past tense. Then, false concept hypothesized error is the most common cause of error after the overgeneralization, with a percentage of 48.81%. False concept hypothesized happen when students misunderstand the use of to be "was" and "were", and the lowest cause was ignorance of the rules' restrictions with a percentage of 20.24%. This cause occurs when students do not know the rules in simple past tense.

Based on the results of interview with eighth grade students of SMP Miftahul Ulum Rambli Puji, it showed that

most of the students did not understand the use of the simple past tense. Most of the students' answers in the interview were confused in using the second verb (Verb 2) in the simple past tense, especially in using regular and irregular verbs, they were confused which verb should be added with the suffix "d/ed". They were also misunderstand in using to be "was" and "were". The result of interview is in accordance with the student's response in the questionnaire. In the questionnaire, the percentage of sources of overgeneralization errors that say using regular and irregular verbs is very high. Then, the percentage of false concept hypothesized that say using to be was and were has the second highest percentage after overgeneralization. This means that most students did not understand about regular and irregular verbs and they still misunderstand the use of to be in the simple past tense.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussion, students made several errors in using simple past tense in writing text. Moreover, it can be concluded that the most types of error in the use of simple past tense by eighth grades students of SMP Miftahul Ulum Rambipuji were error

of misinformation with 386 errors.

Based on analysis of questionnaire and interview, it can be concluded that the causes of students in making error in the use of simple past tense were ignorance of the rules' restrictions, overgeneralization, and false concept hypothesized. Overgeneralization was the highest causes of students making errors, then false concept hypothesized was the second highest causes after overgeneralization, and the lowest causes was ignorance of the rules' restrictions.

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