

INTERPRETING ERROR IN THE USE OF SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE IN EFL STUDENTS' WRITING

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Abstract: This study suggests two research questions. First, what types of simple present tense errors do students make in their writing text? Second, what are the errors' causes?. It aims to describe and investigate the causes of errors in using simple present tense in writing text made by eleventh grade students in Jember. Descriptive qualitative research was used in this study because the data in this study were presented in the form of words rather than numbers. Data were obtained in a natural context, and were discussed descriptively. It was compiled using information provided by English teachers and students. This information was gathered from student questionnaires and the writing worksheet score. It can be assumed that the most common errors were misformation errors. The error can be seen in the use of incorrect morphemes or structures. It happened when students used one grammatical form instead of another. Students made more errors in the use of the verb form, subject form, object form, to be form, and to do form in simple present. Thus, error analysis is performed based on surface strategy taxonomy: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. It is expected that analyzing students' errors in using simple present tense in writing descriptive text will improve the teacher's teaching strategy and help students overcome their errors, particularly in writing.

Keywords: Error Analysis; Simple Present Tense; Writing

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years, there have been many studies which investigated the grammatical error on students' writing in various forms of writing. The research was carried out on students of different levels of education (Abushihab, 2014). Most of the previous research focuses on grammatical errors in general and several specific grammar components, with the way of the analysis using linguistic category taxonomy (Alfiyani, 2013; Sadiyah & Royani, 2019; Wennyta, 2016). However, there is relatively few studies analyzed errors in the use of simple present tense in the students' descriptive text using surface strategy taxonomy. This study is dealing with the surface characteristic error. It focuses on specific error and its causes of the students' errors in the use of simple present tense. Thus, it is conducted error analysis based on surface strategy taxonomy, that is errors in the use of -s/-es in the verb form and "to be" for the subject. Due to that relatively few studies mentioned, therefore there is a need for further

research to find the cumulative findings. ⁵ By analyzing students' errors of using simple present in writing descriptive text, it is expected to improve teacher's teaching strategy and overcome the students' error, especially in writing.

METHOD

This section presents the method used in this research. It covers types of research, data of the research, source of data, research area, data collection technique, ⁷ instrument of the research, technique of analyzing data, and technique of data validity.

Types of the Research

Descriptive qualitative research will be used in this study. According to James B. Schreiber and Kimberly Asner-Self (2011), qualitative research aims to explore phenomenon in the natural settings, and it uses several methods in interpreting, understanding, explaining and bringing meaning to the research problem. This design will be used because the study's data in this research is ² in the form of words in written language rather than numbers, obtained in a natural context, and discussed descriptively.

Data of the Research

Rather than numbers, ⁸ qualitative data is collected in the form of words or pictures. The information from English teachers and students will be used to compile the data for this study. ² This study obtain data in the form of student questionnaires response, the percentage of students' writing worksheet, and the answer of students' interview.

Source of Data

The only data in this study is a primary data source. The primary data includes students' writing worksheet in the form of guided writing in descriptive text entitled "The Popular Football Player". To complete the writing worksheet, students must fill in the blank with the correct answer. The students will be given 40 minutes of maximal duration to complete it. Moreover, ²⁷ students' questionnaire will be consisted of 10 questions which those questions is mainly aim to find out about the possible cause of the errors. Students' interview also will be primary data in this study. There are five questions that students must answer honestly. This interview was

conducted to find out the causes of error in the use of simple present tense. There are 37 participants in this study. They are coming from the XI OTKP 3 of SMK PGRI 5 Jember.

Research Location

The research was conducted in class XI of SMK PGRI 5 Jember which is located in district, Jember regency, East Java, Indonesia.

Data Collecting Techniques

Documentation, questionnaires, and interview were used to collect the data. Documentation was used to obtain students' writings in the form of guided writing in descriptive text, questionnaires and interview was used to collect data on the causes of errors. The following are the procedures of collecting the data. It started with delivering the initial instructions to students and explaining on how to complete the writing worksheet and questionnaires. Then, prepare the instrument of writing worksheet and hands it over to the students. After they completed the writing worksheet, then collect the results of it. Next, they had to do the last task that was answering to the questionnaire. After the questionnaire sheet was answered by the students, they were interviewed one by one to find out the causes of error in the use of simple present tense. Last but not least, the next procedure was data analysis for writing worksheet, questionnaire, and interview.

Instrument of the Research

There are some instruments that will be used in this study, those are writing worksheet, questionnaire sheet, and interview questions.

1) Writing Worksheet

Writing Worksheet is designed to collect students' writing in the form of guided writing in descriptive text, which will subsequently be assessed for errors using the Surface Strategy Taxonomy. Students will be asked to fill in the blank in descriptive text with the correct answer. The titled is "The Popular Football Player" which it consisted 20 blanks which must be filled by students, 10 blanks for the use of "s/es" and 10 blanks for the use of "tobe". The students have 40 minutes of maximum duration to complete the writing worksheet.

2) Questionnaire

The questionnaire will be used aims ¹ to find out the possible cause of the errors committed by the students in using simple present tense in the context of fill in the blanks the descriptive text entitled “The Popular Football Player”. The type of the questionnaire of this study is a closed question, which consist of 10 questions. This type of questionnaire will be used because closed question allows the students to respond quickly, and also it make the researcher easier to analyze the data and tabulate the results of the questionnaire obtained. Moreover, the researcher will also use Guttman scale. The reason in using this scale is used to get clear, concise and consistent answer. In this type of questionnaire, the students just simply need to respond with “yes” or “no” towards the questionnaires’ question.

3) Interview

This study will use semi-structured interview. This kind of interview is used to establish a pleasant and flexible situation in which information on the ²² causes of error committed by the students in using simple present tense. There are five questions that students must answer honestly. Students will be interviewed when they finished the questionnaire. This interview will conducted one by one to the students.

Technique of Data Analysis

Since this study will use several data collection techniques, thus the data analyzing techniques will be differ for each data obtained.

1) Analyzing students’ writing

In analyzing students’ writing, this study will use technique of analyzing data from Carl James (1998). It consists of five steps, those are ¹ error detection, locating error, describing error, classifying error, and counting error. In counting the errors committed by the students and find out the dominant errors. This study will use the stastical of percentage formula by Sudjiono ¹² (2008). The formula is below:

$$P = F/N \times 100\%$$

Where:

P: Percentage

F: Frequency of errors occurred

N: Number of total errors

2) Analyzing questionnaire

The Guttman scale was used in this study to score students' responses to questionnaire questions. There were two types of responses, each with a different score. Those responses are "Yes" with (scored 1) and "No" with (scored 0). After scoring all the responses, it then analyzed using the formula below to find out the percentage of the students' responses to the questionnaire.

$$P = NS/IS \times 100$$

Where:

P: Percentage

NS: The total of questionnaire score

IS: Ideal of questionnaire score

After having the percentage of the students' response, then go to the last part. That is calculating the average score of each item to obtain the gradation of item scores. The formula used is presented below:

$$Me = \frac{\sum N}{N}$$

Where:

Me: Mean (average)

$\sum N$: Total of score observed

N: The total of items

Analyzing the result of students' interview

The data in this study was analyzed using the interactive analysis methodology developed by Miles and Huberman (1984). There are three parts to this analysis: data reduction, data presentation, and verification or conclusion. In this interactive analysis, data was collected while performing a technique in the field, and the operation continued until the desired conclusion was reached. The interactive research pattern is as described in the following:

1. Data Collection

An interview was used to gather information about the causes of students' errors in using the simple present tense. The information was then transcribed. Following that, the students' responses were presented with descriptive data.

2. Data Reduction

Data reduction is the process of selecting, formulating, and focusing all types of information that support the study data gathered or recorded during the data extraction process. The students' responses were summarized based on the study's context and irrelevant information was removed.

3. Data Presentation

The data presentation is a collection of data in the form of a complete description that is organized based on the primary findings from data reduction and presented in a logical, systematic, and simple language.

4. Conclusion

Conclusions can be drawn after the data has been presented. Because this is a descriptive qualitative study, the process must use existing data, and the data must be evaluated using the context provided by the research data. Finally, it can be carried out by repeating the analysis stages, which include analyzing the obtained data and then reducing the data based on field notes and the conclusions that have been developed.

Technique of Data Verification

Data triangulation, according to Moleong (2007), is a data verification technique that employs a hypothesis or a source. Furthermore, Ary (2010) claims that combining multiple data sources is advantageous. This study will use data triangulation to determine whether the data

collected by one technique or instrument matches the data collected by another procedure or instrument. According to Moleong (2007), triangulation techniques are classified into four types: data source triangulation, methodology triangulation, investigator triangulation, and theoretical triangulation. The source triangulation approach was used in this study to assess data validity and cross-check the respondent. Several data sets were compared in order to examine the observation and documentation findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings of Errors Type

After analyzing the students' responses to the task, it was discovered that three types of errors were made by the students. Omission, addition, and misinformation were the errors. The table below shows the total number of each error as well as the percentage.

Table 1: The percentage of errors

NO	Types of Errors	Frequency	Percentage
1	The Errors of Omission	17	16,83%
2	The Errors of Addition	41	40,20%
3	The Errors of <u>Misinformation</u>	44	43,56%

From the table above, it shows that the most frequent error that were committed by the students was misinformation errors (44 errors or 43,56%). The next error is addition error (41 errors or 40,20%). The least errors among those 3 errors is omission error (17 errors or 16,83%). Further information and explanation of those three errors are presented below.

Omission Error

Students made omission error with a total of 17 errors. Some examples of student omissions include the following:

- Respondent with initial FRA, item number 7:

“He start wearing number 7 since he became the member of Manchester United.” In the underlined word, it missed a suffix “s”. It should be “starts”, since the subject is the third singular person.

- Respondent with initial DA, item number 10:

“He love to wear a watch whenever he goes out.”

In the underlined word, it missed a suffix “s”. It should be “loves”, since the subject is the third singular person.

- Respondent with initial ATC, item number 14:

“Sometimes he donats his blood to the blood bank.”

In the underlined word, it missed a letter “e” from the original word. It should be “donates”.

Addition Error

Students made omission error with a total of 41 errors. Some examples of student addition include the following:

- Respondent with initial NSP, item number 18:

“He does not likes to drink alcoholic drink.”

In the underlined word, it adds a suffix “s”. it should be “like” since ²⁸ it is the negative form of simple present tense. The verb should be in their original form.

- Respondent with initial AIS, item number 20:

“It is not the only good thing that I likes.”

In the underlined word, it adds a suffix “s”, it should be “like” since the subject is not the ¹³ third singular person. The verb should be in their original form.

- Respondent with initial BF, item number 7:

“He start’s wearing number 7 since he became the member of Manchester United.”

In the underlined word, it adds a contraction “s”. It should be “starts”, such a contraction is not existed in the form of verbs.

Misformation Error

Students made 44 misformation errors. The following are some examples of student blunders:

- Respondent with initial OR, item number 2:

“His full name are Cristiano Ronaldo dos Santos Aveiro.”

In the underlined word, it is wrong to be. It should be “is”, since it describes a noun.

- Respondent with initial RL, item number 8:

“His skin color are olive.”

In the underlined word, it is wrong to be. It should be “is”, since it describes a noun.

- Respondent with initial UF, item number 12:

“Based on the data that I round on the internet.”

It should be “found”, just like the clue provided in the writing task. The word or verb should be in their original form.

Research Findings of Error Causes

Data from The Questionnaire

A questionnaire was also distributed to the ²⁴ students in order to collect information about the source of errors. The questionnaire had ten statements that needed to be answered. These

questions were designed with the source of error, intralingual transfer, in mind. The percentage of each statement is shown in the table below.

Table 2: The percentage of questionnaire statement

STATEMENT	YES	NO
1	89,19%	10,81%
2	59,46%	40,54%
3	75,68%	24,32%
4	83,78%	16,22%
5	94,59%	5,41%
6	35,14%	64,86%
7	24,32%	75,68%
8	32,43%	67,57%
9	81,08%	18,92%
10	89,19%	10,81%

The description and explanation of table above are presented below:

- Statement number 1:

The statement was “Do you know what the simple present tense is?”. Most of the students answered “Yes”. It shows that the percentage is 89,19%. Whereas, only 10,81% of students who answered “No”. The aimed of the statement was making sure whether the students already knew simple present tense. Before, they responded to the next statements.

- Statement number 2:

The statement was “Do you apply the use of simple present tense in writing descriptive text?”. The results of the response are 59,46% of the students answered “Yes”, and 40,54% answered “No”. It means that more than a half of the total students are usually apply the simple present tense in writing descriptive text.

- Statement number 3:

The statement was “Do you have difficulty using the simple present tense in sentences?”. The results of the response are 75,68% of the students answered “Yes”, and 24,32% answered “No”. It means that most of the still have difficulty using the simple present tense in sentences.

- Statement number 4:

The statement was “Do you use the basic form of the verb (Verb 1) in the simple present tense?”. The results of the response are 83,78% of the students answered “Yes”, and 16,22% answered “No”. It means that most of the students use the basic form of the verb (Verb 1) in the simple present tense.

- Statement number 5:

The statement was “Do you use tobe “is” on the subject “he, she, it”?”. The results of the response are 94,59% of the students answered “Yes”, and only 5,41% answered “No”. It means that almost all the students use tobe “is” on the subject “he, she, it.

- Statement number 6:

The statement was “Do you use tobe “are” on the subject “he, she, it”?”. The results of the response are 35,14% of the students answered “Yes”, and 64,86% answered “No”. It means that most of the students do not use tobe “are” on the subject “he, she, it.

- Statement number 7:

The statement was “Do you add "-s" to verbs that end in "o, ch, sh, x, and z"?”. The results of the response are 24,32% of the students answered “Yes”, and 75,68% answered “No”. It means that most of the students do not add "-s" to verbs that end in "o, ch, sh, x, and z.

- Statement number 8:

The statement was “Do you add “-es” to verbs that end in “t, e, k, and r”?”. The results of the response are 32,43% of the students answered “Yes”, and 67,57% answered “No”. It means that most of the students do not add "-es" to verbs that end in “t, e, k, and r”.

- Statement number 9:

The statement was "Do you use "do" in the subject "I, you, they, we" in simple present tense verbal sentences?". The results of the response are 81,08% of the students answered "Yes", and 18,92% answered "No". It means that almost all the students use "do" in the subject "I, you, they, we" in simple present tense verbal sentences.

- Statement number 10:

The statement was "Do you use "does" in the subject "he, she, it" in simple present tense verbal sentences?". The results of the response are 89,19% of the students answered "Yes", and 10,81% answered "No". It means that almost all the students use "does" in the subject "he, she, it" in simple present tense verbal sentences.

Data from Interview

The students' interviews took place in May 2022. After students completed the worksheet and questionnaire, the interview was held. The purpose of this interview is to identify the causes of student errors in the use of the simple present tense, particularly errors in Intralingual Transfer. According to the interview, they were not confident in answering the questions because they believe English is difficult and they did not understand the meaning. In other words, they were unaware of the use of verb form in simple present tense, such as which verb should be suffixed with s/es. The other students expressed their confusion about the differences between using s/es in verb form in simple present tense. Furthermore, students did not understand how to use the subject in the simple present tense.

CONCLUSION

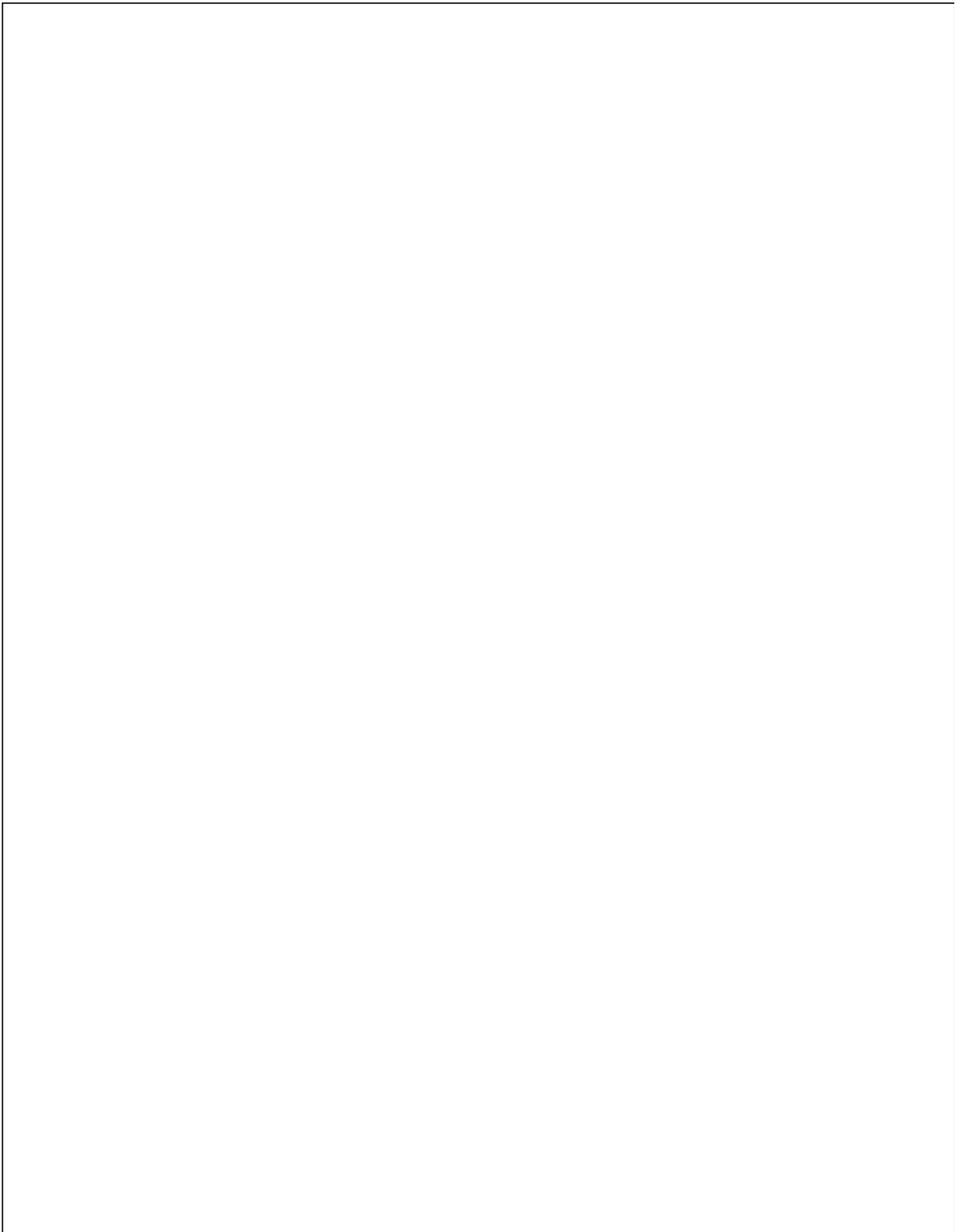
According to the research findings and discussions, the eleventh grade students of OTKP 3 at SMK PGRI 5 Jember made several mistakes in their use of the simple present tense in their writing text. Omission errors were the most common type of error committed by students. Students make errors in the use of "s/es" in the simple present tense by omission. Students were perplexed as to which verb should be suffixed with "s/es." Overgeneralization, ignorance of the rules' restrictions, and false concept hypothesized are the causes of students' errors in the use of simple present tense. Overgeneralization occurs in this study when students generalize the rules for using "s/es" in simple present tense. When students do not know the rules in simple present

tense, they are unaware of the rules' restrictions. Moreover, when students misuse or misform grammatical elements, they hypothesize a false concept.

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