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Students' Error in Writing Simple Past Sentences

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to find out the types of errors made and difficulties faced by the students at SMA Negeri 1 Ingin Jaya when writing simple past sentences. This study used a descriptive design. The sample was 30 grade-10 students at SMA Negeri 1 Ingin Jaya. The instruments used in this study were tests and interviews that was given to the participants to find out the types of errors and the difficulties faced by them in writing the simple past tense. The data analysis technique used in this study were the percentage formula for test and interview analysis based on Miles et al. (2013). Based on the results of this study, it was found that there were 26% of students made an error in omission, 71,33% in misinformation and 2,67% in misordering. The highest error was in misinformation. Based on the result of the interviews, it was found that there were several difficulties faced by students in writing simple past tense sentences; the students have difficulties in determining and using the correct form of regular and irregular verbs, and they have lack of knowledge about simple past tense material.

Keywords: Error analysis; Difficulty; Writing skill; Simple past sentence

A. Introduction

Grammar is one of the components of English that must be learned by every student at school. Ayuningtias and Wenanda (2013) say that every student is said to be skilled if the student can write and speak English with proper grammar. Meanwhile, Sa'diah (2017) says that when communicating, either directly or indirectly, what must be considered is not only good vocabulary but also correct grammar. Therefore, grammar is the first component of English that is learned at school.

In grammar, various components are studied. One of them is tenses. According to Ratnah (2013) in writing English sentences, both oral and written, tenses have a very important role. Furthermore, Irawan (2018) states that there are three main types of time descriptions in English, namely present tense, past tense, and future tense.

Each of these tenses is divided into more specific time descriptions. One of them is the simple past tense which is one of the materials studied during high school. In the K13 revised English syllabus, the simple past tense material is taught to tenth-grade students in the second semester by being given a case, students make a short text by applying the simple past tense.

Several studies find students still make errors in writing simple past sentences. In Millah's study (2016), it was shown that the main types of students' errors found in the students' recount text were misinformation (54%), omission (38%), and addition (6%). Whilst the least error was misordering (2%). Meanwhile, Anwar's study (2014) showed that the types of errors often made by students in writing a narrative text were misinformation (54%), followed by omission (26%), misordering (14%), and finally addition (6%).

In terms of causes, students face difficulties so that errors occur. A study by Hidayah (2013) found that several identified difficulties contributed to errors in the use of the simple past tense in writing essays, namely low knowledge, the influence of mother tongue and lack of exposure.

However, the kind of this study has not been done much in senior high school in Aceh Besar. Therefore the writer conducted such study at SMA Negeri 1 Ingin Jaya. Furthermore, the focus in this study is that the writer wants to investigate the types of errors the students make in writing

simple past sentences, and what are the difficulties faced by students in writing simple past sentences of SMA Negeri 1 Ingin Jaya.

B. Method

The design in this study used a descriptive design. According to Sugiyono (2014), the descriptive analysis method is a statistic used to analyze data by describing the data that has been collected as it is without intending to make conclusions that apply to the public or generalizations. The writer determined that the design is descriptive research because the study focused on finding the type of errors the students made and the difficulties they faced in writing simple past sentences.

The population of this study was all 10th-grade students of SMA Negeri 1 Ingin Jaya. The total population was 111 students who are divided into two majors namely IPA and IPS. Meanwhile, the sample used was 30 grade 10 students of SMA Negeri 1 Ingin Jaya. The students came from Blang Bintang, Montasik and mostly from the area around the school.

In this study, the writer employed test and interview as the instruments. The writer gave a writing test by giving a topic to the students. The topic given was "What did you do over the weekend?". The students were asked to write at least 100 words based on the 10 questions which were given as a guide. Furthermore, for the interview the writer gave five questions to students. The writer took 10 students to interview about the difficulties they faced in writing simple past tense sentences. In the study, the writer applied structured-interview. The writer employed the test and interview from Bayinah's (2013) study that is based on the study of Sugiarti (2012). Then the writer adapted the test and interview by modifying the questions to fit the object that the writer examined. The writer adjusted the instructions in the test to write simple past sentences to find out the errors made by students in writing simple past sentences and adjusted some interview questions to find the difficulties faced by students when writing simple past sentences.

In analyzing data, the writer collected the students' works. To analyzed the data from the test, the writer read all the worksheet. Then, the writer checked the students' answers and identified errors. Furthermore, the writer classified the types and causes of errors and analyzed descriptively the types of errors based on Ellis's (2003) theory. Next, the results were analyzed with the percentage formula to find out the dominant errors made by

students. The writer used the percentage formula to process the data. The percentage formula used was:

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

Explanation :
P = Percentage of error
F = Frequency of error
N = Total number of errors
(Source: Sudijono, 2012)

In analyzing data from the interview, the writer recorded the answers from the student. Then, the writer listened to the answers from the students. Next, the writer rewrote or transcribed the answers from the students. After that, the writer adopted from Miles, et al.(2013) three steps in analyzing the qualitative data; data reduction, data display and conclusion verification.

C. Research Findings

In this study, the writer found many errors in writing simple past tense sentences made by students and then the writer made a classification of these errors. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the writer only focused on the types of grammatical errors according to Ellis (2003), namely omission, misinformation and misordering. The writer showed the results of these tests in the table below:

Table 1. The Recapitulation of Student's errors.

No	Student	Omission	Misinformation	Misordering
1.	IK	4	1	
2.	RA	1	3	1
3.	R	1	2	
4.	TRS	1	3	
5.	SR	1	4	
6.	I	1	2	
7.	AY	2	4	
8.	I		4	
9.	SM	1	6	
10.	NS	1	4	
11.	S	1	5	
12.	DS	1	5	
13.	A	1	5	

14.	N	1	5	
15.	ANH	3	1	
16.	BN	1	6	
17.	AY	1	6	
18.	K		2	
19.	FI	2	2	
20.	M	1	1	
21.	IS	2	3	3
22.	RJ	1	5	
23.	FM		3	
24.	NAA	2	2	
25.	MA	1	3	
26.	M	2	4	
27.	AA	3	7	
28.	MR	1	6	
29.	EA		1	
30.	MH	2	2	
	Total	39	107	4
	Total error		150	

The table above showed the number of errors found in the writing test results by the 10th graders of SMA Negeri 1 Ingin Jaya. The writer found that the number of omission errors is 39. Furthermore, the number of misinformation errors is 107. Finally, the number of misordering errors is 4. The total number of errors found was 150 errors.

After the data was calculated based on the table above so that it is easier to understand, then the writer summarised it in graphic form. The graph below described the results of the errors made by students in writing simple past tense sentences.
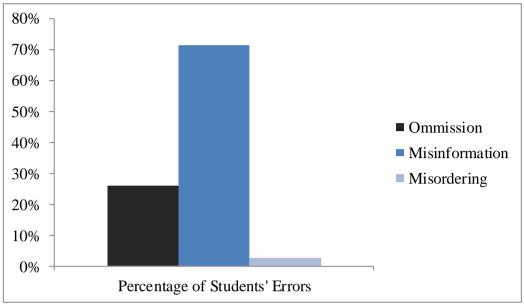
Figure 1. The Percentage of Students' Error

The graph above showed the percentage of students' errors based on the classification proposed by Ellis (2003). The writer found that most of the students, or 71.33% of them, made the type of error of misinformation. Secondly, 26% of the students made the omission type of error. The last type of error made by the students was in misordering and was done by only 2.67% of the students.

For the result of the interview, The writer asked the students several questions. The first question asked about "What do you know about the simple past tense?". Based on interviews, the students answered that "the simple past tense is using the second form of verb (V2), using regular and irregular verbs, and describe events that have occurred in the past". The students knew about simple past tense and could explain the meaning of the simple past tense correctly that the simple past tense is a sentence that uses the second form of the verb.

The second question, asked about "Do you know about regular and irregular verbs used in the simple past tense? Can you tell the difference?". Based on interviews, students believed that they knew the regular and irregular verbs used in the simple past tense and students could explain the meaning both properly and correctly. The students could

also tell the difference between the regular verb and irregular verb, that the regular verbs are verbs that are always followed by the suffix -d, -ed or -ied while irregular verbs are verbs that are irregular so that their forms are different from the basic form.

In the third question, about "which form of the simple past tense is the most difficult? Regular or irregular verbs? Why?". The students thought that they had difficulty in regular verbs because the verb forms are changed differently, some are added with -ed, -d and -ied endings, so that the form of the verb always changes from the basic form. Students also had difficulty with irregular verbs because the verbs always change irregularly from the basic form, so students had to look up the verb form dictionary because students did not remember it. Finally, students also assumed that regular verbs and irregular verbs are difficult because the forms of both verbs are always changing and different.

In the fourth question, about "How does the teacher explain the use of the simple past tense? Do you understand the explanation?". Students explained that the teacher taught simple past tense by writing on the blackboard and then explaining, writing examples on the blackboard and then telling one by one to come forward to work on questions, making sentences. Students also explained that there were teachers who only explained the lesson. Some students understood, but most of them did not understand.

In the last question, about "is it difficult to write simple past tense sentences? Why?". Based on the interview, students claimed that writing simple past tense sentences is difficult because it uses a second verb so the form of the verb is different. When studying, they could use a dictionary but during exams they cannot use a dictionary in writing simple past sentences. Then there were students who answered that they still did not understand the simple past tense.

Based on the students' interviews above, the writer found that most of the students faced difficulties in determining and using the forms of regular and irregular verbs and still had difficulty in writing simple past tense sentences. Students also still did not understand the simple past tense. This difficulty caused students to make errors in writing simple past tense sentences where they tended to use the basic word form for each verb. This was also because there are those who did not understand the explanation from the teacher.

D. Discussion

The result of this research is that the most frequent errors made by students were misinformation followed by omission and misordering. This statement is the same as the statement of the results from previous research by Millah (2016) which stated that the most frequent errors made by students were misinformation, then omission and misordering. It is proven by the percentage of students doing misinformation error (71.33%) which is higher than the percentage of other errors, namely omission (26%) and misordering (2.6%). Similar to the results of previous studies that students still make various mistakes in writing simple past sentences. But they are dominant in misinformation, as said by Sa'diah (2017) the highest frequency of errors made by students is misinformation (33%) followed by addition (30,69%), omission (25,74%) and the last is misordering (10,56%). Furthermore, Umar (2015) found that the student errors are misinformation (75%), omission (58,33%) and addition (50%).

Then, the difficulties faced by students in writing simple past sentences are lack of knowledge. This statement is the same as the statement of the results of previous research by Hidayah (2013) which stated that the difficulty found was the limited knowledge of students in writing simple past sentences. It is proven by the results of interviews where students had difficulties in determining regular and irregular verbs, and students did not understand the explanation from the teacher. The results of this study are in line with the research result by Umar (2015) who stated that the difficulty of students in writing simple past tense is the word forms or V2 which is still the basis of the problem when students write something in the past.

Overall, the results of this study indicated that the errors that are often made by students of SMA Negeri 1 Ingin Jaya in writing simple past sentences are misinformation, omission and misordering caused by difficulties faced by students, namely lack of knowledge about simple past tense.

E. Conclusion

Based on the result of the test, it can be concluded that misinformation is the most frequent error made by grade 10 students of SMA Negeri 1 Ingin Jaya with a total error of 107 and the percentage is

71.33%. Second, there is an ommission with 39 errors and the percentage is 26%. The last one is misordering with the number of errors 4 and the percentage is 2.67%.

Based on the data of the interview, it was found that most of the students faced difficulties in determining and using the forms of regular and irregular verbs and still had difficulty writing simple past tense sentences. Students also still did not understand the simple past tense. This difficulty caused students to make errors in writing simple past tense sentences where they tended to use the basic word form for each verb. This is also because the difficulty in understanding the teacher's explanation about simple past tense.

The teacher should give a simple explanation so that the students can easily understand the explanation from the teacher. Besides, the teacher should pay more attention and give more practice in writing simple past tense to the students so that they can write correctly. The students must also be more active in studying the regular and irregular verbs so that the students do not experience difficulties in determining regular and irregular verbs. Furthermore, the students should pay more attention to the explanation from the teacher so that they can understand the simple past tense material. The next researcher can find effective ways to improve students in writing simple past tense sentences so that students could improve their writing skill, particularly in writing simple past tense.

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