

## **An Analysis of Student's Errors in the Use of Simple Present tense at Secondary School Students**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper aims to determine the type of errors that occurred in speaking daily activities of eighth grade SMP Islam Pancor Kopong. This research used a qualitative design. This study focused on analysing the types of errors produced by students in simple present tense that have been collected from 15 eighth-grade students of SMP Islam Pancor Kopong. These data can be found in the spoken test. The researcher asked the students to tell them about their daily activities. This test should be completed by subjects to identify errors in their speaking. The results of this research. The researcher found some types of errors such as omission, addition, misformatio,n, and misodering. Omission (29 errors = 39.19%), followed by misformation (20 errors = 27.03%), addition (14 errors = 18.92%) and misodering (11 erros = 14.86%).

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Language is a daily life need for humans; it has also become a main tool for communicating with each other. Through language, people can convey their ideas, opinions, feelings, and thoughts. Commonly, when people deliver a message through language, it happens by speaking directly. However, language can be delivered in many ways, not only through direct speaking but also through expression or body language. Body languages consist of gesture, facial expression, sign and etc (Maoula et al., 2022).

English Language Teaching (ELT) in Indonesia is based on the curriculum designed by the Ministry of Education. Teaching the English language is not an easy task for Indonesian teachers, who encounter many difficulties, such as understanding the characteristics of students with diverse backgrounds, especially in the teaching and learning process. One of the challenges in teaching the English language is motivating students to speak in English (Sulhairi et al., 2022).

Grammar is important because it makes meaning for language. To use a language properly, it is important to understand the grammar of the language and its meanings. Grammar refers to the types of words and word groups that make up sentences in any language. Grammar is a set of rules for constructing and analyzing sentences. It is very clear that grammar consists of rules, which used to arrange or construct sentences. Grammars can also be used to analyze words or sentences based on form and function. English has broad grammar, including tenses, nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, and articles. Both kinds of grammar are concerned with rules, but in different ways. The use of English grammar is different from that of other languages. In writing skills, it is important to use good grammar because it is meaningful when the grammar is correct. The reader easily understands the ideas and meanings if the writer uses good grammar (Muis, 2019, p. 1).



Most students never consider the complexity of the simple present tense. They confuse the use of plural and singular when they speak the simple present tense. They are still influenced by their mother tongue because there is no change of verb in Indonesian. The students still made many errors in using tenses. One of the tenses that was regarded as difficult by them was the simple present tense. They found difficulties in understanding the sentence in simple present tense, the formula of simple present tense, and the rule of verb in simple present tense.

For example, the student said, "She runs so quickly" instead of "She is running so quickly". Therefore, they often make many errors when they speak using the simple present tense. Third, singular persons such as he, she, and it need suffix -s or -es for the verb. This shows that Indonesian students do not consider that in English, there are verbs formed in singular or plural. In Indonesian, singular or plural forms do not affect the verb form.

The reason for analyzing students' errors in using the simple present tense is that this title is interesting to research because the researcher previously focused on the analysis of student writing using the simple present tense. Analyzing student errors in the use of the simple present tense can provide valuable insights into the common linguistic challenges learners face. The simple present tense is one of the basic tenses in English and is widely used in everyday communication. Understanding proper usage is essential for the ability to speak, write, and understand English well. Research can inform teaching methods, curriculum development, and language assessment strategies to better support student learning and proficiency in English or any other language.

Understanding the errors made by students in the use of basic tenses in English is important. By understanding the errors, we can identify areas where students have difficulty and design more effective learning strategies to help them master these tenses. This is important in improving students' communication skills in English, especially at the junior high school level.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Spoken Language

The development of speaking skills in foreign language learning has become the main focus of much language education research. Speaking has a crucial role in the language acquisition process, because it is one of the

main communicative skills that allows learners to interact and communicate effectively in different social contexts (Onishchuk et al., 2020).

Research by Johnson (2019) highlights the importance of structured speaking practice in foreign language classes to improve students' speaking skills. Through the use of a variety of speaking activities, such as role-playing, group discussions, and simulations of real situations, learners have the opportunity to develop the ability to confidently and appropriately use the target language.

In addition, emphasizes the importance of contextual learning in learning to speak. Through introducing students to cultural contexts and authentic communicative situations, learning to speak becomes more relevant and meaningful for them, which in turn can increase their motivation and interest in language learning (Dewi & Primayana, 2019).

Kazemi & Kalani (2013) state that "speaking is considered as an important and essential matter for foreign language learners or English as a foreign language of learners". Speaking competence plays an important role in learning and understanding language. It is used to express thoughts in verbal utterances. "Speaking is the productive skill aural/oral skill. It consists of systematic verbal utterances that convey meaning. Speaking is a human interaction which is used to share information with others". That speaking ability is an interactive process to produce production, response and information processing (Masuram & Sripada, 2020).

Speaking is a productive skill and the ability to communicate with witnesses. Because the main purpose of speaking is to communicate and express thoughts effectively, it is important for students to understand the meaning of overthinking.

### Definition Of Error Analysis

Analysis is an activity that explains the origin or structure of complex problems by selecting them one by one (Meisa, 2014). 12). Errors are defects in students' speech or writing (Tarigan, 2011, p.126). From the definition above, it can be concluded that error analysis is an activity to explain or describe the parts of errors contained in the learner's speech or writing.

Error analysis is an approach in the field of linguistics and language learning that aims to understand the errors made by learners when using the target language. This approach involves collecting, analyzing, and interpreting errors made by students to identify patterns of errors, their causes, and learning implications that can be drawn. Essentially, error analysis focuses on the



mistakes made by learners as part of the language learning process. Its main aim is to aid understanding of how language is learned and understood by learners, as well as to assist in designing more effective learning strategies.

### The Type of error

Dulay, Burt, and Kashen (1982, p. 150) suggest that there are four principal ways in which learners modify target forms:

a Omission

Errors of omission were identified by the absence of an item or morpheme that must appear in a well-formed utterance. This error occurred when the learners omitted some of the required components from their sentences.

b Addition

The error of addition was the opposite of omission. These kinds of errors were identified by the presence of an item which is necessary or mostly does not appear in well-formed sentences. There were three types of this type of error. This is a subcategory. Regularization, Double-marking, Simple addition.

c Misformation

The errors of misinformation were identified by the use of incorrect morphemes or structures. There were three types of these errors, which were regularization, archi-form, alternating form.

d Misordering

This type of error is characterized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in well-formed writing.

### Simple Present Tense

The simple present tense is not only used for habits and general facts but can also be used for ongoing actions in a broader sense. The simple present tense describes a situation that lasts for quite a long time. They also state that this tense is often used to refer to future actions when the event is based on a fixed schedule (Thomsom and Martinet, 1986).

Based on the explanation above, I can conclude that the simple present tense is a form of time in English that is used to express events, habits, or facts that occur regularly or generally. In the simple present tense, the verb is usually not changed (no -ed added) unless the subject is a third-person singular (he, she, it), in which

case -s or -es is added to the verb. The simple present tense expresses an action or state of being in the present.

### METHODS

According to (Sugiyono, 2016) research methods are scientific ways to collect data with the aim of describing, providing, developing, and discovering knowledge and theories to understand, solve, and anticipate problems in human life. Research methodology is a collection of tools and procedures used in conducting scientific research, starting from problem formulation, sample selection, data collection, data analysis, to interpretation of results (Suharsimi, 2013).

This type of research is qualitative, namely data collected in the form of words, pictures, and not numbers. In other words, this type of research cannot use quantitative methods. (Murray 2010) stated that qualitative research methods focus on systematic explanation and analysis. This has been attracting increasing attention in the field. Based on this explanation, this paper will focus on analyzing and explaining the error of using the simple present tense.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the data analysis, students' errors in using Simple Present tense can be categorized into several groups:

a. Subject and Verb Agreement Errors

The most common errors were in the form of verbs that did not agree with the subject. For example, students often do not add "s" or "es" to the verb for the verb for the third person singular subject (he, she, it). Example of common errors: She goes to school every day (instead of; She goes to school every day).

b. Incorrect Negative Usage

In the negative form, students often make mistakes in using "do not" or "does not". Many students tend to mix these rules or use the wrong base for the verb. For example; She don't like ice cream (instead of: she doesn't like ice cream).

c. Inappropriate Use of Time Adverbs

Students also often experience confusion in using time adverbs that are appropriate for Simple Present Tense, such as "always", "usually", and "never". This error usually occurs because of a lack of understanding of the frequency of situations that are appropriate for the adverb. For example,



he never goes to the gym (instead of; he never goes to the gym).

d. Incorrect Use of Verb Be

Although the verb “be” is one of the simple verb forms, students still often make mistakes in its use. Sometimes, use the wrong form of “be” or mix it with other forms of the main verb.

For example, she is a good student (instead of she is a good student).

From the observation results, it is known that these errors are mostly caused by several factors, including

- a) Mother Tongue Interference: In Indonesian, there is no change in verb form based on the subject, so students are accustomed to using one verb form for all subjects. This causes students to forget to adjust the verb in the Simple Present Tense with its subject.
- b) Lack of grammar Understanding: Many students still do not understand the grammar rules in Simple Present Tense. They were not aware of the rules for changing the verb form for the third person singular, the use of auxiliary words in negative and interrogative forms, and the use of appropriate time adverbs.
- c) Influence of Wrong Habits: Some students are also accustomed to making mistakes because they are not immediately corrected or do not realize that what they are doing is wrong. This habit is carried over until they have difficulty changing it.
- d) Lack of Focus on Learning: Several students admitted that they felt that this material was taught too quickly, so they had not fully understood the concept of the simple present tense before moving on to other materials.

From the observations made, it can be concluded that eighth-grade students still often make mistakes in using Simple Present Tense, especially in subject and verb agreement, negative usage, and question formation. Is it necessary to teach these tenses? Some recommendations to improve students’ abilities include the following:

- Enhance contextual practice with writing and speaking. Provide more detailed and

immediate feedback when students make mistakes.

- Implementing more interactive teaching methods, such as grammar games or the use of language learning apps that help students practice the Simple Present Tense more frequently and enjoyably.

By implementing these recommendations, it is hoped that students can improve their ability to use the simple present tense in the future.

Based on the result of the interview that was conducted from 27 July 2024 the researcher conducted the interview with 19 students as the participants of the study, but almost all the students had the same opinion and answer. Students’ perception of the simple present tense can be seen in the dialogue below:

### 1. Interview with students

- 1) **Questions:** What do you find most difficult when using the simple present tense?

**Student answer:** I find it difficult to remember when to add ‘s’ or ‘es’ to verbs in the third person singular. Sometimes I forget and just use the best form of the verb.

**Student answer:** I find it difficult to add ‘tobe’ and using ‘preposition’ is difficult for me.

**Student answer:** For me, it is difficult to make sentences. I confuse how to use the grammatical structure.

- 2) **Questions:** What caused you to make a mistake when using the simple present tense?

**Student answer:** Part of the negative sentences and questions, sometimes I am forgetting to use ‘Do’ and ‘Does’ and end up making mistakes.

**Student answer:** I usually forget to add ‘s’ or ‘es’ to verbs when the subject is third-person singular. This makes my sentences imprecise.

- 3) **Questions:** In your opinion, what can help us to better understand the simple present tense?

**Student answer:** If there were more speaking exercise in class, I think it would be easier for me to remember how to use the simple present tense correctly and makes it easier for me to understand how to use in real life

**Student answer:** Watching videos or animations that show different



scenarios using the simple present tense may be the most helpful. It helped me visualize how and when to use the tense in everyday conversations.

- 4) **Questions:** Which one does you like written exercises, speaking, or listening?

**Student answer:** I prefer speaking because I can practice speaking English directly, which helps me improve my pronunciation.

**Student answer:** I prefer written exercises because I can develop my writing skills and learn more new vocabulary.

**Student answer:** I like all, but if I had to choose, I prefer speaking because I find it easier to express myself through conversation.

- 5) **Questions:** Is it easier to learn the simple present tense? **Student answer:** Not always, because sometimes we find it difficult to make sentences using the grammar structure.

**Student answer:** No because there are grammatical rules that must be understood.

**Student answer:** No, the context in which the simple present is used can be confusing.

**The 14<sup>th</sup> student answered:** Yes, because it can make it easier to make sentences.

**The 15<sup>th</sup> student answered:** No, the rules for using the simple present can be confusing in practice.

Students suggested that more varied teaching methods should be implemented, such as the use of audio-visual media and more opportunities to practice speaking in class.

## 2. Interviews with English Teachers

- 1) **Questions:** What is the biggest challenge in teaching simple present tense to eighth graders?

**Answer:** The biggest challenge is helping students understand the difference between the base form of the verb and the form ending in 's' or 'es' for the third-person singular. Many of them already understand the rule, but still make errors in the application.

Second, I see many students who have difficulty with changes in

negative and interrogative sentences. They are used to positive sentence patterns, and many students do not fully understand the use of auxiliary verbs such as 'do' or 'does'. They often use them incorrectly or combine them with main verbs that have undergone change.

- 2) **Question:** What teaching method do you use to teach the simple present tense?

**Answer:** I usually use a written exercise-based approach, where students have to create positive, negative, and interrogative sentences based on certain situations.

Based on interviews with students and teachers, errors in the use of simple present tense in eighth grade are generally caused by students' lack of understanding of grammatical rules, especially regarding the third person singular subject and the use of do/does in negative and interrogative sentences. Students tend to have difficulty applying theory to practice due to the lack of contextual and interactive exercises.

In this analysis, the errors made by eighth-grade students in the use of simple present tense were identified and categorized based on four types of errors: omission, additions, misformation, and misordering. The following are the results of a more detailed analysis.

**Table 1.** *The Findings of the Errors*

No	Type of Error	Total errors	Percentage (%)
1	Omission	29	39.19%
2	Misformation	20	27.03%
3	Addition	14	18.92%
4	Misordering	11	14.86%
	<b>Total Errors</b>	74	100%

### 1. Error of Omission

According to Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982), Omission is an error in which linguistic elements that should be included in a sentence are excluded. In this study, the researcher found that there were 29 omissions (39.19 %) from 15 students.

Incorrect	Correct
I read before bed	I read <b>a book</b> before bed
I sleep in afternoon I scroll tiktok	I sleep in <b>the</b> afternoon <b>then after that</b> I scroll tiktok



My mother go super market at 6 a.m	I mother <b>goes to</b> super market at 6 a.m
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study, the researcher found 20 errors in misinformation (27.03 %) from 15 students.

## 2. Addition

According to Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982), addition is an error that occurs when students add unnecessary elements to a sentence. In the type of addition error, there were 14 errors from 15 students.

Incorrect	Correct
Pray isha then <b>my Al-Qur'an I read</b>	Pray isha then I read Al-Qur'an
I wake up pray <b>for</b> asar	I wake up for pray asar
I play game <b>always</b> in afternoon	I always play game in the afternoon

Incorrect	Correct
I <b>am</b> go to breakfast	I go to breakfast
I wake up at 05.00 then <b>for</b> I take a bath	I wake up at 05.00 then I go to take a bath
I go <b>to</b> home after study	We go home after study

## 3. Misformation

According to Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982), a Misformation is an error in which the form of a morpheme or structure is used incorrectly. In this

Incorrect	Correct
I takes towel before take a bath	I take a towel before take a bath
I usually <b>went</b> to school at 06.30 a.m	I usually go to school at 06.00 a.m
<b>I</b> and my friend <b>goes</b> to canteen	Me and my friend go to canteen

## 4. Misordering

Dulay, Burt, & Krashen (1982, Misordering is an error in which the order of words in a sentence does not conform to grammatical rules. In this study, the researcher found 12 errors in misordering (11 %) from 15 students.

## CONCLUSION

The interviews revealed that the main causes of these errors were a lack of in-depth understanding of the rules of the simple present tense, confusion in applying the rules consistently, and a lack of practice in constructing contextually correct sentences.

Based on the result finding, the total happened by eight grade students, consisting of 15 students, of SMP Islam Pancor kopong in speaking daily activities. It was found that errors in the use of the simple present tense were still quite significant and varied. Omission errors (39.19%) were dominant, followed by misformations (27.03%), additions (18.92%), and misordering (14.86%).

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