

Error Analysis on Simple Past Tense in Short Story Making: A Case Study in Writing Intermediate Class

Dyah Kristyowati¹, Jordy Satria Widodo², Henny Suharyati³, Ferdi Abdurrahman⁴, Muhamad Alwi Pajri⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5}*Pakuan University, Bogor, Indonesia*
dyah@unpak.ac.id

Abstract. This article investigates the error analysis of the utilization of the simple past tense among students of Writing IV class focusing on their short story composition. The study aims to identify prevalent errors and patterns in the application of the simple past tense while creating short stories. Employing qualitative research methods, the study evaluates a representative sample of writing produced by the students. Through systematic error analysis, the study categorizes and analyzes the errors in terms of verb conjugation, tense consistency, and contextual appropriateness. The findings shed light on common challenges faced by students in grasping the nuances of the simple past tense. There were 85 work pieces used to gather the data and analyze the errors in using the simple past tense. Finally, the data were categorized into four types of errors, such as misordering, misformation, addition, and omission. Moreover, the study concentrates on potential factors contributing to these errors, such as the students' linguistic backgrounds, learning materials, and classroom instruction. The research's conclusions emphasize how important it is to use focused language teaching techniques to improve students' understanding of grammatical structures. In the end, this study advances our pedagogical knowledge on how to teach grammar successfully, especially when it comes to developing precise language abilities in the context of creative writing. It is anticipated that requiring the students to create short stories in the simple past tense will improve their comprehension of how tenses are formed.

Keyword: College Students; Error Analysis; Short Stories; Simple Past Tense

Received: 30-03-2024

Revised: 06-02-2025

Accepted: 30-09-2025

Corresponding Author: Dyah Kristyowati; dyah@unpak.ac.id



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

INTRODUCTION

To communicate effectively, it is essential to comply with the rules in languages (Seruni, 2023). In English alone, tenses are central to conveying the timing of an action, occurrence, and event

within a sentence. They involve the conjugation of the modifications of verbs to indicate the timing of events. Moreover, they also take the selection of specific verbs that contribute to the timing of activities or events described in a sentence (Napratilora & Yanti, 2019). Understanding them is valuable for determining if the events occur in the present, past, or future time frame. Each tense serves a distinct purpose following its conjugation in a sentence (Fadzilyna, 2013). Hence, when composing or speaking in English, it is very essential to carefully select which tenses to employ.

Furthermore, tenses constitute an integral component of grammar since it serves the purpose of elucidating the occurrences events, or actions within a narrative. They serve as a linguistic tool employed by English speakers to deliver temporal aspects in their language, thereby facilitating a more native-like process of thinking (Grain, 2006). Consequently, it is imperative for students to grasp the role of tenses when composing sentences, paragraphs or essays. In fact, tenses have become the focal point in determining the temporal aspects of certain events, occurrences, or actions to take place within a framework in utterances or sentences (Kartini, 2022).

Writing serves as a means for individuals to articulate their thought, way of thinking, and emotional state in a manner comprehensible to themselves and other people (Seruni, 2023). Siddiq (2013) explains that this entails transforming thoughts into coherent sentences and paragraphs and later-developed into essays. Given that writing, in addition to speaking, is one of language productive skills commonly utilized to convey the concepts and to serve as a way of communicating with others, it becomes evident that learning English necessitates a focus on a skill of writing. Writing offers limitless chances for expressions and, like listening, speaking, and reading, is an essential skill to be cultivated by students (Iftanti, 2016). In fact, proficiency in writing holds significant importance in the lives of students which means that it exerts a profound influence on their development and serves as a vital skill for foreign language learners to acquire.

The curriculum in English writing class at the English department, at the university level requires students to engage in writing various types of texts with a very good sentence structure and composition, especially in the fourth semester. Additionally, short stories are the subject of the study since the mostly found errors often happen within the narrative text, and most students often make mistakes in interpreting the temporal aspects of narrative texts (Seruni, 2023). Seruni (2023) also points out that a short story is a written piece that narrates a fictional event, characterized by its brevity compared to any other types of texts in English. When composing a short story, it is required to comply with the composition of simple past tense as it is the predominant tense utilized in expressing the ideas in this genre of the text. In actual practice, Ikan *et al* (2018) states that simple past tense is employed to narrate the past events in English. Also, it encapsulates intricate life experiences inspired by real-world situations or conditions, sharing similarities with other genres, like novels, in the context of point of view, characterization, characters, theme, plot, and setting. In consequence, a short story is a condensed work of fiction centered on a specific theme, with the narrative predominantly employing the simple past tense along with appropriate past-time adverbs (Lubis, 2014).

English language learning posed specific difficulties, with primary focus in the operation within the acquisition of vocabulary and the grammatical structure which is very distinct in the Indonesian language (Agustina, 2013). Students generally believe that they can effectively communicate through speech or writing when they possess an extensive vocabulary and understand how to construct coherent sentences. The occurrences of errors in language learning are very closely related to a student's grasp of the target language, in this case, English. Moreover, error analysis entails the systematic examination, categorization of deviation, and analysis of intended language use by learners (Brown, 1980). Consequently, error analysis serves as a valuable tool in identifying common errors made by the students and devising strategies to rectify them. In essence, error analysis comprises the comprehensive process of scrutinizing the characteristics of language acquisition among foreign language learners, taking the identification,

description, analysis, and elucidation of errors made when it comes to composing a written structure in accordance with the grammatical function of the language (Seruni, 2023).

As students embark on studying English, errors are an inherent and essential aspect of the language acquisition process. Additionally, Halim (2018) explains that Indonesian students often encounter difficulties with tenses, particularly the simple past tense, when it comes to writing short stories, as there are no corresponding verb changes in the Indonesian language. Therefore, the primary objective of this qualitative study is to examine and explain the error analysis concerning the utilization of the simple past tense in narrative texts, especially short stories in Writing 4 class, at the English department, Pakuan University. This study is closely associated with the development of English writing skills within the learning process in the classroom, and it profoundly analyzes the errors made by native Indonesian when they studied English writing skills in the Writing intermediate class.

METHOD

This study made use of a qualitative descriptive approach as it aims at analyzing the errors made by fourth-semester students in the writing intermediate class at Pakuan University within the English Department. Qualitative research it seeks to gain insight into subjects' experiences encompassing actions, motivations, thoughts, and behaviors. It also focuses on understanding and describing the phenomena through the usage of narrated words (Moleong, 2014). To provide an extensive analysis of errors related to word order, the study adopted a descriptive research design, aligning with Burns and Grove's (2003) explication on the subject. Descriptive research is valued for its ability to offer a genuine portrayal of a specific context or scenario (Seruni, 2023). Hence, a qualitative descriptive approach was chosen to gain a thorough understanding of students' errors in using the simple past tense in composing narrative texts, notably short stories written by the students of Writing IV class, English Department, Pakuan University.

This study examines the students of the Writing intermediate class, English Department, Pakuan University as the samples. The technique that was used to select the participants of the study was random sampling, which indicates the similar characteristics between the sample and the population as stated by (Seruni, 2023) the class was randomly selected following the recommendation of the head of the study program. The class was, then, opted to be the participants since the writing piece of short stories was made a semester final project for the writing class, and was put into consideration as one of the scoring components of the class. In fact, it is characteristically structural and grammatical when it comes to analyzing the errors from the written product (Halim, 2018).

The data was taken from the anthology of short stories written by all students from writing intermediate class, English Department, Pakuan University. The aim of writing short stories as the final project of the class is to examine the understanding of writing concepts, the ability in creative writing and applying the grammatical structure that follows its components. There were 85 work pieces used to gather the data and analyze the errors in using the simple past tense. Finally, the data were categorized into four types of errors, such as misordering, misformation, addition, and omission as proposed by Scovel (2001). Then, the weakness and the strength of the students were projected, and they were made a basis in evaluating the class materials and teaching activities and focus.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the analysis of errors identified in students' short story compositions. The dataset comprises 85 compositions, and each was submitted by a different student. These compositions were collected in a single writing session following standardized instructions that

Error Analysis on Simple Past Tense in Short Story Making: A Case Study in Writing Intermediate Class

Dyah Kristyowati, Jordy Satria Widodo, Henny Suharyati, Ferdi Abdurrahman,
Muhamad Alwi Pajri

required students to produce a short narrative of approximately 500 words. The analysis primarily examines four types of errors which were systematically identified and categorized. Data presentation follows a structured format with Tables 1 to 5 displaying the identified errors. The numbering system within these tables corresponds to the order of composition submission.

Table 1 The Total of Errors

Omission	Addition	Misformation	Misordering
7	5	52	2

Based on the table above, it can be seen that students mostly made misformation errors and a total of fifty-two errors were found. There are seven omission types of errors found in students' writing. Then, five errors in addition types and only two errors for students were found in misordering. The total number of errors made by fourth graders in the English Literature Study Program are sixty-six errors.

A. Error in Omission

Table 2. Examples of Omission

No	Data	Correction
1.	Unfortunately, after that day we became strangers again but I don't know what made us strangers like that.	Unfortunately, after that day, we were strangers again. But I don't know what made us strangers like that.
2.	for Andy itself Luna is his savior on his loneliness.	for Andy himself, Luna was his savior in his loneliness.
3.	So, in my first time I new that covid 19 is popular.	So, for the first time, I knew that covid 19 was popular.

After dissecting the data, it can be seen that the omission falls into a few classes which are the omission of 'be', pronoun, and punctuation. In the first data above, the students omitted the 'be' of simple past tense where it should appear. Secondly, they do not give pronouns to describe ownership of a noun. Then, they tend to omit punctuation

B. Error in Addition

Table 3. Examples of Addition

No.	Data	Correction
1.	However, as time came to a crawl, did the sun bounced off his helmet and soon his vision began to blur.	However, as time came to a crawl, the sun bounced off his helmet and soon his vision began to blur.
2.	For silence embraced his mind, in a flash did light once more graced his flesh.	For silence embraced his mind, in a flash light once more graced his flesh.

3.	Lucifer conjured dark energy and sent it hurtling towards the the twins.	Lucifer conjured dark energy and sent it hurtling toward the twins.
----	--	--

The second type is an addition error. It was found that the errors of addition included the addition of 'did', and unnecessary words. Almost all data found the students always used 'did' in a verbal sentence for instance as can be seen in the table above. The interference that the students experience is seen in the verb they are using. They tend to use the second form of verb in the simple past tense. There is use of double articles in their sentences.

C. Errors in Misinformation

Table 4 . Example of Misinformation

No.	Data	Correction
1.	In such, did her face turn a bit pale.	In such, her face turned a bit pale.
2.	Only a familiar warmth upon his calloused fingers did his attention return to the brunette before him.	Only the familiar warmth upon his calloused fingers brought his attention back to the brunette before him.
3.	He couldn't breathe, squirming as he tries to comprehend the very scene.	He could not breathe, squirmed as he tried to comprehend the very scene.
4.	Through such hazy eyes, did he pull one final mechanism.	Through such hazy eyes, he pulled one final mechanism.

The misinformation errors committed by the students in simple past tense used is seen in the wrong use of the verb, be, and auxiliary verb. An example of this type of error can be seen from all the data results that lots of verbs are written on verb type one which belongs to the simple present tense. They often write "tries" rather than "tried" and this happens many times. The actual use of the auxiliary "did" is not required.

D. Errors in Misordering

Table 5. Examples of Misordering

No.	Data	Correction
1	Her mother told Rika to quickly have breakfast	Her mother told Rika to have breakfast quickly.
2	I thinking like that for 3 days before the exam	I thought like that for three days before the exam

The last one, in the classification of errors made by the students, is misordering. (Corder, 1974) said in addition to selecting the right forms to use in the right context is to arrange them

Error Analysis on Simple Past Tense in Short Story Making: A Case Study in Writing Intermediate Class

Dyah Kristyowati, Jordy Satria Widodo, Henny Suharyati, Ferdi Abdurrahman, Muhamad Alwi Pajri

in the right order. It is found that the students are good enough at arranging the words in the target language. However, there are some sentences arranged incorrectly. Usually, they reversed in writing the word for instance” Her mother told Rika to quickly have breakfast where it should be “Her mother told Rika to have breakfast quickly. The students made errors in arranging some phrases.

CONCLUSION

This study has described the errors made by students in using simple past tense while writing a short story. After the written test was done, sixty-six errors were made by the fourth-grade students. The results show that the errors are classified into four types which are seven errors of omission type, five errors in addition types, fifty-two errors made to the types of misformation, and two errors for students’ errors found in misordering. Mostly, the students miss the form of simple past tense, they use verb type one which belongs to the simple present tense. They should employ verb type two to describe a past event in the past tense. Additionally, when writing a nominal sentence in the past tense, they very certainly use the incorrect 'be'. Thus, grammar lessons on simple past tense need to be enhanced and enriched by using different methods when it comes to writing short stories as a final project in Writing class This study has described the errors made by students in using simple past tense while writing a short story. After the written test was done, sixty-six errors were made by the fourth-grade students. The results show that the errors are classified into four types which are seven errors of omission type, five errors in addition types, fifty-two errors made to the types of misformation, and two errors for students’ errors found in misordering. Mostly, the students miss the form of simple past tense, they use verb type one which belongs to the simple present tense. They should employ verb type two to describe a past event in the past tense. Additionally, when writing a nominal sentence in the past tense, they very certainly use the incorrect 'be'. Thus, grammar lessons on simple past tense need to be enhanced and enriched by using different methods when it comes to writing short stories as a final project in Writing class.

REFERENCE

- Agustina, D. (2013). Students’ Basic Problems in Learning English: Mastering Vocabulary and Grammar. *Vidya Karya*, 28(1).
- Brown, H. Douglas. (1980). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. Prentice-Hall Inc.
- Burns, N., & Grove, S. K. (2003). *Understanding Nursing Research*. Saunders.
- Corder, S.P. (1974). *Error Analysis: Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition*. London: Longman.
- Fadzilyna. (2013). *Errors in Using the Past Tense Made by 8th Graders of MTsN Model Trenggalek*. Universitas Negeri Malang.
- Fitria, T. N. (2021). Grammatical Error Analysis of English Abstracts Translation in Jurnal Ilmiah Ekonomi Islam (JIEI) Journal. *LITE: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Budaya*, 17(2), 117–126. <https://doi.org/10.33633/lite.v17i2.5050>
- Halim, S. (2018). The Ability of Students in Mastering Simple Past Tense at Politeknik Negeri Ujung Pandang Politeknik Negeri Ujung Pandang. *IDEAS Journal of Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*. 6(2), 107–113.
- Hasibuan, A., & Simatupang, T. M. (2018). Students’ Errors in Using Lexicogrammatical Features in Writing Recount Text (A Study at the X Grade Students of SMA Negeri 4 Padangsidempuan 2016/2017 Academic Year). *Elite : English and Literature Journal*, 5(1), 22–34. <https://doi.org/10.24252/elite.v5i1a3>

- Hutauruk, B. S., Sinaga, Y. K., & Sitingjak, G. (2022). TLEMC (Teaching and Learning English in Multicultural Context) Error Analysis of the Students in Writing a Recount Text (A Case Study at Grade III in English Department Universitas HKBP Nommensen). 6(1). <http://jurnal.unsil.ac.id/index.php/tlemc/index>
- Iftanti, E. (2016). Improving Students' Writing Skills through Writing Journal Articles. *Jurnal Bahasa Lingua Scientia*, 8(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.21274/lis.2016.8.1.1-14>
- Ikan, J., No, T., Banyuwangi, K., Java, E., & Rahmatika, C. A. (2018). A Content Analysis On the Quality of Short Stories in Short Stories For Children Published By Children's Book Trust. *Jurnal Universitas PGRI Banyuwangi*, 5(4), 54-61. <http://ejournal.unibabwi.ac.id/index.php/lunar>
- Ilmiah, I. (2017). An Analysis of Grammatical Error in Writing Recount Text. *Elite : English and Literature Journal*, 3(1), 9–20. <https://journal.uin-alauddin.ac.id/index.php/elite/article/view/3390>
- James, C. (2013). Errors in language learning and use. In *Routledge eBooks*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315842912>
- Kartini, T.W.A. (2022). Error Analysis on the Use of Simple Past Tense in Narrative Text. *Etnolingual*, 6(1), 51—58. <https://doi/10.20473/etno.v4i2.34122>
- Lubis, R. F. (2014). Simple Past Tense In Recount Text, *Ideas Journal*, 1(10), 24-31.
- Makassar, S., & Febri, I, D. (2019). An Error Analysis of Word Order Used in Short Story Made by the Twelfth Grade Students at SMA Gunung. *Rumah Jurnal UIN Alauddin*, 2(5), 55-63.
- Moleong, L. J. (2014). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*. PT. Remaja Rosadakarya.
- Nadya, M., & Muthalib, K. A. (2021). Error analysis of the students' English written descriptive text. *English Education Journal*, 12(2), 196–217. <https://doi.org/10.24815/eej.v12i2.19552>
- Napratilora, M., & Yanti, S. (2019). Tenses Understanding in Using the English Language. *EJI (English Journal of Indragiri) : Studies in Education, Literature, and Linguistics*, 3(1), 29–38. <https://doi.org/10.32520/eji.v3i1.466>
- Richards, J. C. (2015). Error analysis. In *Routledge eBooks*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315836003>
- Ruminar, H. (2018). EnJourMe (English Journal of Merdeka): Culture, Language, and Teaching of English Grammatical errors in ESP students' presentation across proficiency levels. In *English Journal of Merdeka) : Culture, Language, and Teaching of English* (Vol. 3, Issue 1).
- Scovel, T. (2001). *Learning New Languages*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.
- Seruni, F. (2023). Error Analysis on Simple Past Tense Used in Short Story Made by EFL Students. *ELITE: English and Literature Journal*, 10(1), 39-48.
- Setiyadi, Ag. B. (2018). *Metode Penelitian untuk Pengajaran Bahasa Asing*. Graha Ilmu.
- Siddiq, A. (2013). The Use of Semantic Mapping Technique to Improve Writing Skill in the Descriptive Text. *Rumah Jurnal UIN Alauddin*, 1(4), 47-52.