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## The Students' Errors In Using Simple Present Tense In Writing Descriptive Texts At SMK N 4 Padang

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### Abstract

This study set out to identify the common errors made by students at SMKN 4 Padang when using the simple present tense to write descriptive texts. This study used a descriptive research design. The first graders at SMKN 4 Padang made up the study's population. In this study, a proportional stratified random sampling with a sample size of 31 students was used. Writing tests were used as the instrument for gathering data for this study. Using the Pearson Product Moment formula, the researcher examined the writing test's reliability. The test's correlation coefficient of 0.90 confirmed it. The analysis's findings demonstrated the validity of the writing test. It indicates that the test was valid. The findings of this study demonstrated that the first graders at SMKN 4 Padang made errors when using the simple present tense to write descriptive texts. It was established that 16% of students made a singular-plural error, 32% made a verb tense error, 38% made a spelling error, 90% made a punctuation error, and 96% made a capitalization error. Finally, it can be inferred from the results that the students at SMKN 4 Padang made a lot of errors on writing mechanics. It is advised that the teachers remind the students about grammatical errors, particularly in punctuation and capitalization, and help them develop their writing skills with active, creative, inventive, and enjoyable learning approaches. Grammar errors should be avoided when writing descriptive texts and students should practice more. It is also advised that future researchers use this research finding as a reference.

Keywords: *Error in writing, Writing, Simple Present Tense, Objective Descriptive text.*

## Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi kesalahan umum yang dilakukan siswa SMKN 4 Padang saat menggunakan *simple present tense* untuk menulis teks deskriptif bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian deskriptif. Populasi penelitian adalah siswa kelas satu SMKN 4 Padang. Sampel penelitian ini menggunakan *proporsional stratified random sampling* dengan jumlah sampel 31 siswa. Tes tertulis digunakan sebagai instrumen untuk mengumpulkan data. Dengan menggunakan rumus *Pearson Product Moment*, peneliti menguji reliabilitas tes tulis tersebut. Koefisien korelasi tes 0,90 menegaskan hal itu. Hasil analisis menunjukkan validitas tes tertulis. Hal tersebut menunjukkan bahwa tes tersebut valid. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa siswa kelas satu SMKN 4 Padang melakukan kesalahan saat menggunakan *simple present tense* untuk menulis teks deskriptif. Ditemukan bahwa 16% siswa membuat kesalahan tunggal-jamak, 32% membuat kesalahan kata kerja, 38% membuat kesalahan ejaan, 90% membuat kesalahan tanda baca, dan 96% membuat kesalahan kapitalisasi. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa siswa SMKN 4 Padang banyak melakukan kesalahan dalam penulisan mekanika. Disarankan agar guru mengingatkan siswa tentang kesalahan tata bahasa, terutama dalam tanda baca dan kapitalisasi, dan membantu mereka mengembangkan keterampilan menulis mereka dengan pendekatan pembelajaran aktif, kreatif, inventif, dan menyenangkan. Kesalahan tata bahasa harus dihindari saat menulis teks deskriptif dan siswa harus lebih banyak berlatih. Peneliti selanjutnya juga disarankan untuk menggunakan hasil penelitian ini sebagai referensi.

Kata kunci: *Kesalahan dalam menulis, Menulis, Simple Present Tense, Teks Obyektif Descriptive.*

## INTRODUCTION

Many nations, including Indonesia, use English as one of their foreign languages. English is a topic that is highly valued in Indonesia since it has a significant impact on students' futures. For instance, if a student wants to continue their studies abroad, she must pass an English proficiency examination. By studying and comprehending the language, the students will be able to do so with ease.

There are four different categories of skills in English: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. When students wish to study English, they must be able to grasp these four competencies. Xhuvani (2015) asserts that language has played a significant role ever since the beginning of time. Reading, writing, listening, and speaking—commonly referred to as the "four skills"—play a crucial role in learning English language. Writing is a talent that is employed in English to convey

information via writing. Students in any educational setting need to be proficient writers. Students who are proficient writers are able to convey their thoughts or feelings in writing so that others can understand them. Grammar, vocabulary, clauses, and phrases are only a few of the linguistic elements used in writing.

Writing is a talent that is employed in English to convey information via writing. One of the four English skills that English language learners must master is writing. According to Nurgiyantoro (2001), writing is the last ability that students master after speaking, listening, and reading. Writing, according to Nunan (2003: 88), is the mental activity of creating ideas, considering how to convey them, and arranging them into sentences and paragraphs that are understandable to a reader.

The most crucial part of writing is grammar, which is also one of the fundamental elements of language that students need to acquire. Grammar refers to the body of rules governing a language's grammatical construction. Hirai (2010) asserts that grammar is a means of organizing sentences and producing clear language. According to Crystal (2004), grammar uses the linguistic structure of language to allow us to convey our feelings. Therefore, grammar is a description of the language system; it demonstrates how words are combined, arranged in sentences, and changed in form to alter their meaning (Hadfield and Hadfield, 2008). The simple present tense is one of many tenses used in grammar. The first person single subject and third person plural subject, with the exception of the third person singular subject, are used to produce the simple present tense of the verb (Soemarto and Suharjito, 1994:27). Routines and habits are discussed in the simple present tense.

High school (SMA/MA) and vocational high school (SMK) make up the secondary formal education track. SMA/MA stresses theory while SMK prioritizes practice or experience in a particular sector, which is how the two differ from one another. Because English is a general subject and not a major, it is quite challenging for students to comprehend the English learning process in SMK. According to the achievement graph, English has a lower average national score (41.78) at the SMK level than competence (44.12), while Indonesian is higher (65.72).

One of the texts taught in SMK is the description text. It is one kind of English texts that provides a thorough description of an object. Typically, the descriptions show a variety of things, including places, inanimate objects, people, and other living things. Descriptive writing, according to Anderson and Anderson (2003:26), describes a specific person, place, or thing. This indicates that descriptive writing is created specifically to describe people, locations, or things. Additionally, descriptive texts are used to explain a topic by outlining its features without expressing personal opinions.

Occasionally students still make errors when writing descriptive texts. Students might write "He, walk to school every day" rather than "He walks to school every day," for instance. Singular-plural, word form, word choice, verb tense, add or remove a word, word order, unfinished sentences, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, article, meaning not clear, and run-on sentences are among the thirteen categories of errors listed by Azar (2003). These errors can happen when students write a descriptive text, and they need to be noticed, examined, and categorized in order to raise the competency of students' descriptive text writing.

The error, according to Hedge (2000), is an inevitable aspect of language acquisition. Furthermore, Hedge (2000) states that errors are now viewed as a reflection of the learner's interlanguage development stages. Students can learn more and improve their knowledge by making errors. Brown (2007:258) claims that errors are actual departures from the grammar of native speakers and that they reveal the proficiency of learners. Singular-plural, word form, word choice, verb tense, add or remove a word, word order, unfinished sentences, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, article, meaning not clear, and run-on sentences are among the thirteen categories of errors listed by Azar (2003).

Errors, especially those related to the use of the simple present tense in writing a descriptive text, have been the subject of inquiry by a number of academics. "Students' Errors in Using Present Tense in Writing Descriptive Text (A Study at MTsS Jeumala Amal, Lueng Putu)" is the title of a study conducted by Vattia (2018). She described the variables behind students' errors in using the present tenses when writing a descriptive text and examined the four kinds of errors students commonly make: omission, addition, malformation, and disordering. Next, Eka (2014) conducted research on "Error Analysis on the Students Writing of Descriptive Text at SMK N 2 Ciputat Timur". Based on four categories of errors—omission, addition, malformation, and disordering—she examined the causes and types of errors students made when employing adjectives in descriptive texts.

Some earlier studies also have connections to this study. The initial study was conducted by Cholipah (2014) and is titled "An Analysis of Students' Error in Writing Recount Text (A Case Study in the Second Grade Students of SMP Trimulia Jakarta Selatan)." The results demonstrated that, according to Azar's (2003) taxonomy of errors, there are three grammatical mistakes that students most frequently make when producing recount narratives. The first has 200 errors in capitalization, or 23.90%. Word choice is the second most typical error. It has 110 incorrect word choices, or 13.14%. The final one is the verb tense, with a 105 error rate (12.54%).

The following prior research was conducted by Noviani (2015) and is named "An Errors Analysis on Students' Recount Writing (A Case Study at Second Grade Students of SMP Mutiara

Harapan Pondok Aren)." It concentrated on the past tense use errors made by students when composing recount texts. The research revealed that, according to Azar's (2003) taxonomy of errors, there are six types of errors that students make the most frequently when producing recount texts. The first category consists of 63 verb tense errors, or 31.98% of all errors. The second problem is in word choice, which has a total of 24 errors (12.18%). There are then 21 (10.66%) errors belonging to adding a word type error. Following capitalization errors, which have a total of 16 errors (8.12%), are spelling errors, which have 11 errors (5.58%). And the final one has 10 errors (5.08%) that are singular-plural.

The final study was conducted by Nurjanah (2017) and is titled "The Analysis of Students' Error in Using Simple Present Tense in Students' Writing Descriptive Text at the Eighth Grade Students of SMPN 12 Purworejo in the Academic Year of 2016/2017." The study concentrated on the students' errors when using the simple present tense to write descriptive writings, and the findings revealed that the majority of students made errors in malformation, with 70 errors constituting 39.54% of all errors. Omission comes in second place with 57 errors and a 32.21% error rate. The third is out of order, with 29 errors making up 16.39% of the total. The final type is addition, which has 19 errors at a rate of 11.87%. These errors are based on Dulay's (1982:145) classification of errors.

For the writer performing research, the earlier studies mentioned above can be useful resources. Because the previous studies by Cholipah (2014) and Noviani (2015) both discussed the analysis of student errors based on the classification of errors by Azar (2003), this research is the same as the studies mentioned above. And Nurjanah's (2017) study covers the analysis of writing errors in descriptive text. And what sets this study apart from earlier ones is that, in contrast to earlier studies by Cholipah (2014), Noviani (2015), and Nurjanah (2017) that examined student errors in writing recount texts and Nurjanah (2017) that examined errors in writing descriptive texts based on the classification of errors according to Dulay (1982:1), the current study analyzes the students' errors in using the simple present tense in writing descriptive texts.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### *Research Design*

Descriptive research was used as the research design in this study. Descriptive research, according to Refnita (2018:17), entails gathering data in order to test hypotheses or respond to inquiries about the current situation of the study's subject. According to Nassaji (2015), the goal of descriptive research is to describe phenomena and its traits. The researcher selected this descriptive

study because it described the errors made by first-graders at SMKN 4 Padang when using the simple present tense to write a descriptive text.

### *Instruments*

Refnita (2018: 90) claims that the tool the researcher used to get the data is referred to as an instrument. Writing tests were used as the research's instrument. Writing a descriptive text was the subject of the test. There were at least two paragraphs in the text. The pupils had 30 minutes to produce the text. In order to determine how well the first-graders at SMKN 4 Padang employed the simple present tense when composing descriptive texts, the researcher administered writing tests to them.

Validity and reliability are key evaluation factors for tests. Validity, according to Refnita (2018), is the degree to which a test actually measures what it is intended to assess. The researcher employed content validity. According to Refnita (2018), the degree to which a test evaluates an intended content area is known as content validity.

Refnita (2018) claims that a test's reliability is determined by how consistently it measures the subject matter. The inter-rater technique was employed in this study to establish the dependability. Two assessors are required for inter-rater procedure. The researcher served as the first assessor, and Jihan Mailani Putri served as the second. Jihan was a student at Bung Hatta University's English Department. She received "A" grades in the grammar topics of writing sentences, intermediate grammar, and advanced grammar. The test's objectivity was another purpose for having two assessors look it over. The researcher utilized the Pearson Product Moment Formula proposed by Sugiyono (2021) to calculate the coefficient of correlation of errors identified by the two assessors as follows:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{n\sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{\{(n\sum x^2) - (\sum x)^2\}\{(n\sum y^2) - (\sum y)^2\}}}$$

Where:

- rx<sub>y</sub> = the coefficient of correlation between x and y variables.
- n = the total of students who took the test.
- x = the errors identified by the first assessor.
- y = the errors identified by the second assessor.
- Σx = total number of errors identified by the first assessor.
- Σy = total number of errors identified by the second assessors.

$\Sigma xy$  = the total cross product of x and y.

The researcher then categorized the test's coefficient of correlation in accordance with Sugiyono (2021) as follows:

0.80-1.000 = very high

- 0.60-0.79 = high
- 0.40-0.59 = moderate
- 0.20-0.39 = low
- 0.00-0.19 = very low

Following data analysis, the researcher discovered that the test's coefficient correlation was 0.90, indicating a very high level of test reliability. The exam is also valid in terms of its content.

#### *Technique of Collecting the Data*

The researcher employed a test to get the data for this study. The following is the data collection process:

1. The researcher gave the students their test papers.
2. The researcher described the guidelines that students must adhere to, including composing a descriptive text about persons who may be idols, families, friends, or relatives.
3. The test was to be completed in 30 minutes, according to the researcher.
4. After the allotted time had passed, the researcher gathered the students' answer sheets.
5. The researcher delivered the second assessor copies of the test papers that had been made.
6. The researcher and the second examiner listed the errors made by the students in a table based on a certain criteria of errors.

#### *Technique of Analyzing the Data*

The researcher used the following procedures to examine the data:

- 1) Based on Azar's (2003) classification of errors, the researcher and second assessor divided students' errors into the following categories: a) singular-plural, b) Verb Tenses, and c) Mechanics (capitalization, punctuation, and spelling).
- 2) Both the overall number of each student errors and the total errors based on classification were tallied by the researcher and the second assessor.
- 3) Using the formula from Ellis et al. (2018), the researcher determined the proportion of students who made errors as follows:

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

P = the percentage of students who had error

F = the frequency of students who had error

N = the total number of students

4) The researcher interpreted of the data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the data analysis findings, the first graders at SMKN 4 Padang made errors when writing descriptive texts. In terms of singular-plural, 5 (16%) students made errors; in terms of verb tense, 10 (32%) students made errors; in terms of mechanics specifically, spelling, 12 (38%) students made errors; in terms of punctuation, 28 (90%) students made errors; and in terms of capitalization, 30 (97%) students made errors.

Table 1. The percentage of students who had errors in writing objective descriptive text.

| No | Types of Errors | The Number of Students Who Had Errors | The Percentage of Students Who Had Errors |
|----|-----------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. | Singular-plural | 5                                     | 16%                                       |
| 2. | Verb Tense      | 10                                    | 32%                                       |
| 3. | Mechanics       | 30                                    | 97%                                       |
|    | Spelling        | 12                                    | 38%                                       |
|    | Punctuation     | 28                                    | 90%                                       |
|    | Capitalization  | 30                                    | 97%                                       |

As was previously mentioned, this study discovered that many of the first graders at SMKN 4 Padang made errors with the singular-plural, verb tense, and mechanics. It was most likely brought about by their inadequate understanding of the many grammatical features. Those grammar errors were also covered in earlier research by Cholipah (2014), "An Analysis of Students' Errors in Writing Recount Text." The singular-plural error rate was 2.51%, the verb tense was 12.54%, the spelling was 8.48%, the punctuation was 5.38%, and the capitalization rate was 23.9% in her study. The researcher discovered the following errors made by the subjects in this study: singular-

plural 16%, verb tense 32%, spelling 38%, punctuation 90%, and capitalization 97%. In other words, the findings of this study support those of Cholipah.

The first specific result of this study was the singular-plural errors in the first graders at SMKN 4 Padang. The fact that 16% of students made a singular-plural error was a clue. For instances:

Student's Answer: the numbers of members is different in each song.

Correct Sentence: The number of members is different in each song.

Student's Answer: I have two cat.

Correct Sentence: I have two cats.

According to the aforementioned example, the students' descriptive texts contained singular-plural errors. This result was consistent with Vattia's findings that most students (62.92%) made singular-plural errors because they failed to add the -s or -es suffix to plural nouns or use it with singular nouns.

The second specific result of this study was that several first-year students at SMKN 4 Padang made verb tense errors. The fact that 32% of students made verb tense errors served as a clue. For instance:

Student's Answer: She looked so sad every day.

Correct Sentence: She looks so sad every day.

According to the aforementioned example, the students' objective descriptive text contained verb tense errors. This result was consistent with that of Cholipah and Noviani, who discovered that the majority of students made verb tense errors. This indicates that one of the problems students continue to have while composing texts is incorrectly using tense.

The study's final outcome was that 97% of the first-graders at SMKN 4 Padang exhibited mechanics errors. In specifics, 38% of students made spelling, 90% of students made punctuation, and 97% of students made capitalization errors. For instances:

#### a. Spelling

- Student's Answer: Her classmate was so worriod about her.
- Correct Sentence: Her classmate was so worried about her.

#### b. Punctuation

- Student's Answer: See you again bestie
- Correct Sentence: See you again bestie.

#### c. Capitalization

- Student's Answer: Nct dream has 7 members consisting of mark, haechan, renjun, chenle, jisung, jeamin, and jeno.

- Correct Sentence: NCT Dream has 7 members consisting of Mark, Haechan, Renjun, Chenle, Jisung, Jeamin, and Jen0.

According to the aforementioned example, many first-graders at SMKN 4 Padang made mechanics errors with their spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Noviani and Cholipah's earlier research also covered these errors, particularly capitalization errors. This means that one of the issues students have when producing a text is capitalization.

## CONCLUSION

The researcher comes to the following conclusions as a result of the findings and discussion that were previously provided:

- 1) In general, students made errors when writing descriptive texts in the simple present tense.
- 2) The first-graders at SMK N 4 Padang made a singular-plural error when they were composing descriptive texts. The fact that 5 out of 31 students (16%) made singular-plural errors served as a clue.
- 3) The first-graders at SMK N 4 Padang made verb tense errors when they wrote descriptive texts. The fact that 10 out of 31 (32% of the students) made verb tense errors served as a clue.
- 4) Spelling, punctuation, and capitalization errors were common among the first-graders at SMK N 4 Padang. It was evident from the fact that 12 (38%) students had spelling errors, 28 (90%) students had punctuation errors, and 30 (96%) students had capitalization errors.
- 5) The most significant error of the three is a mechanical error. The fact that 12 (38%) students had spelling errors, 28 (90%) students had punctuation errors, and 30 (96%) students had capitalization errors served as a signal. The use of verb tenses comes in second. The fact that 10 (32%) students made verb tense errors served as a clue. The final position uses the singular-plural form. The fact that 5 (16%) students made singular-plural errors served as a clue.

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