

## **ERRORS IN STUDENTS' WRITING COMPOSITION IN SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE "MY DAILY ACTIVITY"**

**Tira Nur Fitria**

STIE AAS Surakarta, tiranurfitria@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

This research aims to find out the types and the most dominant types of error in terms of grammar, punctuation and spelling found in Students' Writing Composition in Simple Present Tense. This study applies mixed method approach to research. This study uses documentation as a method of collecting data. The data demonstrate that the students' errors in writing composition of Simple Present Tense consist of three aspects of writing: grammar, punctuation and spelling. In terms of grammar, there are 66 data or 56.89 %, which consist of some errors in word class (part of speech) such as in verb (25 data or 37.88 %), determiner/article (16 data or 24.24 %), preposition (15 data or 13.64 %), noun (9 data or 13.64 %) and pronoun (1 data or 1.51 %). In terms of punctuation, there are 28 data or 28.14 %, while in spelling there are 22 data or 18.97 %.

**Keywords:** *Writing, Error Analysis, Simple Present Tense*

### **INTRODUCTION**

English consists of four skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing skill. In developing these four skills, the English language components of vocabulary, structure, pronunciation, and spelling are taught to the learners/students. One of the most important skills in the English language that the learners/students need to learn is writing.

Writing is considered as a productive skill. In writing, students learn how to write grammatically correct words, sentences, paragraph, and texts. Writing is one of four skills that must be mastered by the learners/students. It is an active skill because the students have to involve personally in constructing

a good writing product. To make a good writing, it must be constructed according to rules or conventions of the target language. The students have to be well aware of some components of writing, such as vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation and grammar. Writing skills include a product and it is different from other skills. Therefore, it can be said that writing is the combination of all skills in English.

In fact, writing is the skill where the students produce the sentences which are put in a particular order and linked together in certain ways into good paragraph. But the written production is the most difficult task. Writing English is not easy for the students. They may have difficulties when using the language in writing. Consequently, errors in their written products are inevitable. Nevertheless, the learners often make errors in writing composition because they are still influenced by Indonesian sentence structure in making and composing English sentences when writing a paragraph.

Errors are signs from the students who have not mastered the English rules. Errors are faults which the students cannot correct themselves and therefore, need the explanations (Harmer, 2007). The students will not understand the English rules without making errors first. However, errors that are mostly made by the students should be identified, classified or described; a task called error analysis. Error analysis is the study of students' errors which can be observed, analyzed, and classified to reveal something of the system operating within the learners (Brown, 2000). It is aimed to give feedback about the students' types and sources of errors in order for the students and the teacher to get the betterment of English in teaching and learning process.

Therefore, the students learning English often make mistakes and errors while learning English, especially when they try to arrange sentences or use tenses while writing. As a result, they write sentences with incorrect grammar. Since there is no specific rule about the time that affects the verb form in the students' first language system (Indonesian), it therefore becomes very difficult for them to construct correct English sentences.

As a matter of fact, the errors in the use of simple present tense in descriptive text are so commonly occurring to students in writing English. Meanwhile, Simple Present Tense is important as the basic rule for the students to make and use sentences to communicate in their daily life.

The students' error in learning a foreign language is a part of the learning process. It is impossible for students to learn a foreign language without making mistakes or errors. In this study of errors (error analysis) in students' writing composition is part of an investigation of the process of language and learning English. Furthermore, from the above fact, the writer is interested in conducting the study entitled "An Error Analysis Found in Students' Writing Composition of Simple Present Tense". This research will find out the types of errors in the Students' Writing Composition in terms of grammar, punctuation and spelling and to find out the most dominant kind of the errors.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Writing**

Writing skill is an ability to express an idea, opinion, feeling, or experience that somebody has heard in written form. It can begin with a simple piece of writing to a more advanced level. According to Brown (2000), writing is a thinking process, because writing is a process of putting ideas down on paper to transform thought into words and give them structure and coherent organization. Myles (2002) states that the ability to write well is not a naturally acquired skill; it is usually learned or culturally transmitted as a set of practices in formal instructional settings or other environments. Writing skills must be practiced and learned through experience

### **Error Analysis**

Nunan (2005: 31) defines that error analysis involves studying samples of students' written language to identify the grammatical errors they make. This analysis is absolutely needed to be the basis for providing feedback to the students, or for tabulating the errors. Brown (2000) states that error analysis is the study on learner' errors that can be observed, analyzed, and classified to tell something that happen within the learners.

## **Simple Present Tense**

Simple Present Tense is the tense for the description, definition and statements of general truth. Azar (1989) says the Simple Present Tense expresses events, perceptions, feelings, or states that occur or exist always, usually, habitually; they exist now, have existed in the past, and probably will exist in the future. Based on Aitken (1992), simple present tense is helpful to express actions which are always, repeatedly, or generally true, or actions occur at the moment of speaking (with no reference to past or future).

## **Previous Study**

There is a research study which is in line with this research. A study by Fitria (2007) entitled Error Analysis Found in Students' Writing Composition of Simple Future Tense aimed to find the kinds of error and the most dominant kind of error in students' writing composition of simple future tense. This research used the qualitative research to collect empirical data from the students' writings. By using this method, the data would be accurately collected. The object of the research was fifteen students' writing composition which were students of S1 Accounting STIE AAS Surakarta. The result of the analysis shows that the students' error consists of three aspects of writing. First, in grammar, punctuation and spelling. In grammar aspect, there are errors in some points of word class like in noun (21 data or 36,84 %), determiner/article (2 data or 3,51 %), pronoun (1 data or 1,75 %), preposition (15 data or 26,32 %) and verb (18 data or 31,58 %), then the most dominant error in grammar aspect is noun. Second, in punctuation (16 data or 17,20%). Third, in spelling (20 data or 21,51%). Based on the frequency of each aspect of writing error, the most dominant error found in the students' writing composition is in the aspect of grammar (57 data or 61,29 %).

From the previous study, there are some similarities to and differences from this research. The similarities are 1) The kind of research. Both of these studies investigate errors in students' writing composition. 2) The object of the research. Both of the

researches focus on simple tenses. 3) The dominant type of error. Both of researches show the frequency error students' writing is in the aspect of grammar While the differences are, 1) the previous study investigates simple future tense, while this one focuses on simple present tense. 2) The result of the study shows differences in total number of data and in each percentage. 3) In grammar aspect in the previous study, the first rank of error is in noun, determiner/article, pronoun, preposition and the last is verb. While, in this research, the first rank of error is in verb, determiner/article, noun and the last is pronoun.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study will apply the quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method is used to analyze the errors found in the students' assignment. The qualitative method is used to give the description of the students' errors previously presented in the table.

### **Data Source**

The data source is the subject from which the data are taken. The data in this study are primarily data directly obtained from the result of the writing assignment of the students. The total number of the students in this research is 15 students.

### **Technique of Collecting Data**

According to Saleh (2001: 31), "the term of 'instrument' means equipment for collecting the data. In this study, the writer used documentation as a method of collecting data. According to Arikunto (2006: 231), documentation is a number of data that present the verbal data, such as correspondence, journal, memory, report and others' which can be mutually responsible. In this study, the writer uses paper assignment. This is used to know the students' errors in the use of simple present tense in their writing product.

### **Technique of Analyzing Data**

In analyzing the students' written works, the writer uses the process of analysis in the identification of errors as follow:

1. Collecting all of the students' writing composition of simple present tense
2. Reading all of the students' writing composition of simple present tense
3. Making a list of errors to identify what errors the students committed.
4. Classifying the student's errors to determine the types of errors.
5. Using a simple statistical method, namely, the proportion as whole (100%) divided by the types of errors observed. After that, counting the percentage of each error or proportion of frequency of occurrence by using the following formula:

$$Pi = \frac{Fi}{n} \times 100\%$$

Which:  $Pi$  = the proportion of the frequency of errors,

$Fi$  = absolute frequency of a particular type of error

$n$  = the total number of errors observed

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of this research are to answer the research objectives as formulated in the background of the study. This research will find out the kind of error analysis found in Students' Writing Composition in the linguistic aspects of grammar, punctuation and spelling and to find out the most dominant kind of error in Students' Writing Composition of Simple Present Tense. Below are the error analysis and the description of the research data:

### **Grammar**

Grammar is the system of a language. Grammar is the system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in a sentence (Brown, 2000). It is easy to learn and to use dictionaries by the learners to find the pronunciation, spelling, or meaning of words, but it is still difficult to consult grammar books without considerable knowledge of grammar. In this research, there are some errors in grammar, especially in word class (part of speech) found in the students' writing composition. The descriptions are as follows:

## 1. Noun

Example in the second composition:

Incorrect : There are a lot of **cafe** that recommended to visit.

Correct : There are a lot of **cafes** that recommended to visit.

The example above shows that there is an error in the aspect of grammar especially in noun. The singular countable noun “cafe” follows the quantifier “lot”, which requires a noun. It is considered in using a plural noun. It should be “cafes”.

Example in the second composition

Incorrect : ...Solo have lot of **choice**.

Correct : ...Solo have lot of **choices**.

In the example above, there is an error in the aspect of grammar especially in noun. The singular countable noun “choice” follows the quantifier “lot”, which requires a plural noun. It is considered in using a plural noun. Therefore, it should be “choices”.

Example in the ninth composition

Incorrect : ...do not forget I do prayer **isya**,...

Correct : ... do not forget I do prayer **Isya**,...

The example above shows that there is an error in the aspect of grammar especially in noun. In this context, it appears that the word “isya” may be a proper noun in this context. It should be capitalized because it may refer to proper nouns.

## 2. Verb

Example in the first composition

Incorrect : My uncle **sell** soft gun, He **sell** with cheap price.

Correct : My uncle **sells** soft gun, He **sells** with cheap price.

In the example above, there is an error in the aspect of grammar especially in the verb. The plural verb sell does not appear to agree with the singular subject *My uncle* and *He*. Changing the verb form of appropriate Subject-Verb agreement should be considered. Therefore, it will be “My uncle sells” and “he sells”.

Example in the first composition

Incorrect : Solo **have** lot of choice.

Correct : Solo **has** lot of choice.

The example above shows that there is an error in the aspect of grammar especially in the verb. The plural verb “have” does not appear to agree with the singular subject *Solo* which refers to the name of the place. It is considered in changing the verb form of appropriate Subject-Verb agreement. Therefore, it will be “has”.

Example in the fifth composition

Incorrect : ... and I go **to swim** in Tirta Birawa Yudha pool.

Correct : ... and I go **swimming** in Tirta Birawa Yudha pool.

The example above demonstrates that there is an error in the aspect of grammar especially in the verb. The verb “to swim” is usually in the gerund form when it is preceded by the word “go”. Replacing it with the “V-ing” form should be of consideration. Therefore, it will be “swimming”.

### 3. Determiner/Article

Example in the fifth composition

Incorrect : ...,because this is **an** holiday.

Correct : ...,because this is **a** holiday.

In the example above, there is an error in the aspect of grammar especially in determiner/article. The article “an” is incorrect. It should agree with the beginning sound of the following word “holiday” in which the first letter “h” refers to consonant letter and shows consonant sound. It should be “a holiday”.

Example in the eleventh composition

Incorrect : We watch **movie** until 9 PM.

Correct : We watch **a movie/ the movie** until 9 PM.

The example above demonstrates that there is an error in the aspect of grammar especially in determiner/article. The noun phrase “movie” seems to be missing a determiner before

it. Adding an article “a” or “the” would then be more appropriate. Therefore, it will be “a movie” or “the movie”.

Example in the thirteen composition

Incorrect : I always try to finish all tasks before **due** date.

Correct : I always try to finish all tasks before **the due** date.

The example above shows that there is an error in the aspect of grammar, especially in the article. The noun phrase “due date” seems to be missing a determiner/article before it. Therefore, it should be “the due date”.

#### 4. Pronoun

Example in the third composition:

Incorrect : **Me** and my family have a breakfast together.

Correct : **I** and my family have a breakfast together.

The example above illustrates that there is an error in the aspect of grammar especially in a pronoun. In the sentence above appears that the writer used the object pronoun “me” in a subjective position. Changing the word “me” into “I” is more appropriate as subject pronoun in the beginning of the sentence.

#### 5. Preposition

Example in the third composition

Incorrect : At 02.00 I go **to** home.

Correct : At 02.00 I go **to** home.

The example above shows that there is an error in the aspect of grammar especially in the preposition. The preposition “to” seems unnecessarily used after the verb “go”. It is suggested to remove the preposition “to” in the sentence.

Example in the fourth composition

Incorrect : Then go home **until** the house at 10.00 am.

Correct : Then go home **to** the house at 10.00 am.

In the example above, there is an error in the aspect of grammar especially in a preposition. In this sentence, it appears that the preposition “until” may be incorrect in this context. It

should be considered to change the preposition. Therefore, the word “until” should be changed into “to”.

Example in the fifth composition

Incorrect : I love actor **on** that film.

Correct : I love actor **in** that film.

In the example above, there is an error in the aspect of grammar especially in a preposition. The preposition “on” may be incorrectly written in this context. Therefore, the word “on” should be changed into “in”.

## **Punctuation**

Punctuation is the symbol which is used to add the clarity and comprehension of written language. Some common punctuation marks are period, comma, question mark, exclamation point, apostrophe, quotation mark and hyphen. Punctuation has the function to indicate where pauses, stops, questions, omissions, introductions, and other forms of expression occur in the writing. In this research, there are some errors in punctuation found in the students’ writing composition. The descriptions are as follows:

Example in the second composition

Incorrect : It’s great to take a break from **college / work**.

Correct : It’s great to take a break from **college/work**.

The example above, there is an error in the aspect of punctuation especially in slash and spacing. In this context, it appears that there are extra spaces surrounding the slash between “college” and “work”. It is suggested to remove the extra spaces.

Example in the third composition

Incorrect : **i** will tell you about my daily activity on Sunday.

Correct : **I** will tell you about my daily activity on Sunday.

The example above demonstrates that there is an error in the aspect of punctuation especially in capitalizing. The pronoun “i” is written lowercase which should be changed to uppercase. Therefore, it should be “I”.

Example in the third composition

Incorrect : After that I go to my friend's house.

Correct : After that, I go to my friend's house.

In the example above, there is an error in the aspect of grammar especially in punctuation. In this context, it appears that there is a missing a comma after the introductory phrase "After that". Therefore, it should be "After that,...".

Example in the seventh composition

Incorrect : Finally we prepare school books for Monday,...

Correct : Finally, we prepare school books for Monday,...

The example above shows that there is an error in the aspect of grammar especially in punctuation. In this context, it appears that there is a missing a comma after the introductory phrase "Finally". Adding a comma after it should be considered.

## Spelling

Spelling is an aspect of written language which has rules to form the words correctly. Letters must appear in a correct sequence to be meaningful. In this research, there are some errors in spelling which are found in the students' writing composition. The descriptions are as follows:

Example in the first composition

Incorrect : ..., so she cook chicken **everyday**.

Correct: ..., so she cook chicken **every day**.

There is an error in the example above in terms of spelling. The word "everyday" may be used incorrectly. It is suggested to determine the appropriate usage for this context. A space between the word "every" and "day" should be added.

Example in the composition

Incorrect : ..., if I get a **part-time** and can't **hangout** with friends,...

Correct: ..., if I get a **part time** and can't **hang out** with friends,...

In the example above, there is an error in the aspect of grammar especially in spelling. The word "part-time" and

“hangout” may be used incorrectly. It is suggested to determine the appropriate usage for this context. There should be a space between the word “part” and “time” and between the word “hang” and “out”.

Example in the fifth composition

Incorrect : At 10 pm I sleep in my **comfort** room.

Correct : At 10 pm I sleep in my **comfortable** room.

In the example above, there is an error in the aspect of grammar especially in spelling. The word “comfort” does not seem to fit in this context. It is suggested to replace it with a different one or an appropriate word “comfortable”.

## DISCUSSION

Error analysis is the study and analysis of the errors made by second and foreign language learners. According to Brown (2000), the fact that the learners do make errors and that these errors can be observed, analyzed, and classified to reveal something of the system operating within the learner, led to a surge of study of learners' error, called error analysis. It is aimed to give feedback about types and sources of students' errors in order that the students and the teacher will gain improvement of English in teaching and learning process. Harmer (2007) defines that errors or mistakes which they cannot correct themselves and which, therefore, need the explanations and corrections.

This research investigates the kind of error found in the Students' Writing Composition in terms of grammar, punctuation and spelling and the most dominant kind of the errors when using Simple Future Tense. Below is the table of the result of students' writing composition and their errors in terms of grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Table 1. Frequency of Error in Students' Writing Composition

Verb	Determiner	Grammar Preposition /Article	Noun	Pronoun	Punctuation	Spelling
25	16	15	9	1		

37.88	24.24	22.73	13.64	1.51		
		66			28	22
		56.89 %			28.14 %	18.97 %

From the table above, it is demonstrated that the students' errors in writing composition of simple present tense consist of three aspects of writing; grammar, punctuation and spelling. In terms of grammar, there are 66 data or 56.89 %, which consist of some errors in word class (part of speech) such as in verb (25 data or 37.88 %), determiner/article (16 data or 24.24 %), preposition (15 data or 13.64 %), noun (9 data or 13.64 %) and pronoun (1 data or 1.51 %). In terms of punctuation, there are 28 data or 28.14 %, while in spelling there are 22 data or 18.97 %. Below is the description of the students' errors in writing composition:

First, in grammar aspect. Grammar aspect is the most dominant error type found in students' writing composition. Grammar, as one of the elements in the English language, has an important role in the use of language. It is a description of the structure of the language and the way in which linguistic units such as words, phrases, clauses, and sentences are used (Eastwood, 2002). Grammar helps people understand how words and their components combine to form sentences. In this research, there are some errors in word class (part of speech) such as in verb, determiner/article, preposition, noun and pronoun. In verb, the students have a number of errors in writing: 1) Subject-Verb Agreement. The subject *She*, *He* and *I* must follow the rules in which Verb needs *s/es* ending. 2) Gerund form. Some verbs are usually written in gerund form or Verb-ing.

Second, in punctuation aspect. Punctuation aspect is the second rank of the occurring error type found in students' writing composition. Punctuation is the symbols to explain the clarity and comprehension of written language. Some common punctuation marks are period, comma, question mark, exclamation point, apostrophe, quotation mark and hyphen. Punctuation has the function to indicate where pauses, stops, questions, omissions, introductions, and other forms of expression occur in the writings. In this research, there are some errors in writing: 1) Capitalization (uppercase and lowercase), for example in writing "I" as subject

pronoun is written “i” in lowercase. 2) Comma, for example in writing an unnecessary comma after the dependent clause marker “because”. Commas show a minor break or pause in a sentence (Langan, 2006). Using a proper comma makes the meaning of sentences clear by grouping and separating words, phrases, and clauses. Besides, some examples demonstrate that there are many missing commas after the introductory phrase such as *After that*, *In addition*, *Afterward*, and *Finally*, therefore it is suggested to add a comma after it. 3) Slash and spacing. From the examples, there are extra spaces surrounding the slash between two certain words.

Third, in spelling aspect. Spelling aspect is the third rank of the error type found in students’ writing composition. According to Peveen and Akram (2014), aspect like sounds, letters, word parts, word meaning, and word history are those elements which play the important role in learning to spell the words of the English language. In this research, there are some errors in writing certain words appropriately: 1) Inappropriate certain words, therefore some words do not seem to fit in the context of the sentence. It should be replaced by appropriate words (correct diction). 2) Miswritten certain words, therefore some words are considered to determine the appropriate usage for the context. For example, the words *everyday*, *hangout*, and *part-time* should be complemented with a space between the middle of the words.

## **CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION**

### **Conclusion**

From the analysis of this research, it shows that the students’ errors in writing composition of simple present tense consist of three aspects of writing, they are they are in grammar, punctuation and spelling. In the aspect of grammar, there are 66 data or 56.89 %, which consist of some errors in class words (part of speech) such as in in verb (25 data or 37.88 %), determiner/article (16 data or 24.24 %), preposition (15 data or 13.64 %), noun (9 data or 13.64 %) and pronoun (1 data or 1.51 %). In punctuation, there are 28 data or 28.14 %, while in spelling there are 22 data or 18.97 %. Grammar aspect is the first rank of the error type found in

students' writing composition followed by punctuation aspect in the second rank and Spelling aspect in the lowest rank.

### **Implication**

Based on the result of this study, this research can minimize the students' errors dealing with simple present tense in descriptive writing. When teaching English subject, the teachers can give clearer explanation of English grammar rules, such as in parts of speech, tenses or other aspects especially in the simple present tense. Therefore, the students might be able to understand those rules correctly in writing. The teachers also should use their creativity to develop the teaching materials. They may use a variety of methods or strategies in learning English to solve the students' problems, hence the students will gain better understanding on the kinds of tenses. When learning English subject, the students should master the grammar rules especially the usage of tenses well before studying English. Therefore, they can write English composition well. The students should do more writing exercises/practices and should be encouraged to use grammar correctly.

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