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## **An Error Analysis in Using Past Tense in Writing Recount Text at the Tenth-Grade Students of MA Nurussalam Tetebatu in Academic Year 2024/2025**

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**Abstract:** This thesis investigates the types and dominant errors made by tenth-grade students of MA Nurussalam Tetebatu in the academic year 2024/2025 when writing recount texts, specifically focusing on their use of the past tense. Writing is identified as a challenging skill for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in Indonesia, often leading to grammatical errors, particularly in recount texts which necessitate the use of past tense to retell events. The study categorized errors into four main types: omission, addition, misformation (selection), and misordering. Employing a descriptive quantitative research design, the research involved a sample of 62 students from classes X.2 and X.4, selected using cluster sampling from a total population of 130 tenth-grade students. Data was collected through a writing test where students composed a recount text titled "My Past Holiday". The analysis involved identifying, describing, and explaining the observed errors to understand their underlying causes, such as first language interference or a lack of conceptual understanding. The findings revealed that misformation was the most dominant error type, accounting for 53.85% of all errors. This research provides valuable insights into the persistent challenges students face in mastering English grammar, particularly past tense forms, and aims to serve as a foundation for improving teaching strategies for writing recount texts.

**Keywords:** error analysis, past tense, recount text, tenth-grade students

## **INTRODUCTION**

Writing is one of the of the basic skills students have to pay attention to, as it is undeniably inseparable from the student's world and integrated with other English skills. Among the four language skills, writing is the most difficult to master. According to Phuket (2015), the student of English as a foreign language (EFL) finds it very difficult to master writing skills. This is because writing skills require mastery of various linguistic elements and outside the language itself, which was the contents of the essay. Writing skills are usually associated with learning to write. Writing and composing exercises in teaching English can familiarize students with applying linguistic knowledge, such as grammar, vocabulary, style, spelling, and so on. However, for students in Indonesia, writing is a challenging issue. Many students make errors in their writing, including recount text. This phenomenon is widely

observed, with studies highlighting prevalent grammatical errors across different academic levels (Hakim et al., 2022) and general difficulties in English proficiency among Indonesian students, often linked to underlying grammatical accuracy (Khotimah et al., 2021). According to Cholipah (2014), recount text is the text that talks about events or the experiences in the past in which this kind of text is used to entertain the audiences.

The one aspect of English grammar that often leaves us confused is tenses. Tense can be broadly categorized into past, present, and future in connection with a situation or state. It is with tenses that many errors are committed. The concept of English verb tense is very important in establishing effective communication. To maintain the ways of communication better, that is, writing. We need to gain mastery over English tenses, especially in the past tense. MA Nurussalam is one of the high schools in Tetebatu. The school is located in Tetebatu,

Sikur, East Lombok. Based on the curriculum Merdeka (KM) that is used in the tenth-grade of Ma Nurussalam, students are expected to apply and understand the generic structure of recount text both in oral and written form about retelling events or experiences in the past. The components of generic structure consist of three. There is orientation (provides the setting and introductory paragraph that tells who, what, where, why, and when), sequence of events (tell what happened, in what sequence), and reorientation (a conclusion).

Furthermore, based on the National Curriculum of Ma Nurussalam, one of the basic competences that must be mastered by the students is catching the meaning contextually related to the social function, generic structure, and language features of simple written and spoken recount texts concerned with historical events. The cumulative minimum standard (*KKM*) that has to be achieved by students for writing recount text is 75. In MA Nurussalam Tetebatu, writing has been taught since the first year of the English teaching period. Based on the syllabus, there are five texts of genre taught that involve: descriptive, narrative, recount, procedure, and report. Recount text is recognized and taught by the teacher to the students in the seventh grade in the teaching learning process. The students learn how to write recount text. The basic competence that should be reached by the students of junior high school is to make them able to write a recount text based on the grammatical features and the generic structure of the text. There are three generic structures in this text; they are orientation, events, and reorientation.

When the writer did preliminary research at MA Nurussalam in the middle of March, the writer found the research problem based on the interview with Mr. Suhaibi. He is an English teacher of MA Nurussalam Tetebatu. He said the students at MA Nurussalam Tetebatu do not have problems with their writing recount texts because they have studied how to write recount texts. But in the learning process, the students sometimes do not realize that they make mistakes because of the ignorance of the grammar. The students face many difficulties in using tenses while writing. The researcher realized that the errors that students made in using tenses, especially in the past tense, needed to be analysed carefully.

There are still students who ignore the use of grammar in writing; on the other hand, tenses

are needed in English text. It means that error may occur because of the limitations of human beings in mastering the target language. Errors can occur in any linguistic component, including grammar and must be carefully analysed. This research specifically focuses on errors of omission, addition, selection and ordering. Based on the description above, the researcher is currently conducting research entitled "**An Errors Analysis in Writing Recount Text at The Tenth-grade Students of MA Nurussalam Tetebatu**" with a total number of tenth-grade students of 130 people. This is due to the gap between students' ability to write recount texts and the demands of the curriculum. Many students still have difficulties in constructing effective sentences, using the correct tenses, and organizing coherent paragraphs. This research is expected to provide a clearer picture of the types of errors that often occur and the factors that influence them, so that it can be a basis for improving the teaching of writing recount text.

## METHODS

This study employed a descriptive quantitative method to investigate past tense errors in recount texts written by tenth-grade students at MA Nurussalam Tetebatu. As stated by Cholid (2013), descriptive research aims to reveal current phenomena through observable data. The variable examined was students' grammatical accuracy, particularly in the use of past tense. Data were collected through a writing task in which students were asked to compose a text titled "My Past Holiday" within 60 minutes after receiving a 10-minute explanation on recount text structure. The collected texts became the primary data source. The population consisted of 130 students across four tenth-grade classes. Using cluster sampling as described by Sugiyono (2017), two classes (X.2 and X.4) were randomly selected, totalling 62 students. This selection ensured a balanced representation and practical access to the sample. Ethical considerations were observed by obtaining the school's permission and informing participants about their rights and data privacy. To ensure reliability and validity, the writing prompt and scoring rubric were reviewed by two English teachers.

Student writing was assessed using a rubric covering grammar accuracy and text structure, classifying scores into four categories:

Very Good, Good, Sufficient, and Poor. Error identification was guided by Dulay et al.'s (1982) Surface Strategy Taxonomy, which includes omission, addition, selection (misformation), and misordering. The analysis followed Ellis and Barkhuizen's (2005) model consisting of three steps: identifying, describing, and explaining errors. Causes such as first language interference, lack of grammatical understanding, and teaching limitations were also considered. To quantify errors, frequencies were calculated using the formula by Sudijono (2010):  $P = (F/N) \times 100\%$ , where P is the percentage, F the frequency of each error, and N the total number of errors. Microsoft Excel was used to support data tabulation and ensure accuracy. This structured approach allowed the researcher to draw conclusions on error patterns and offer targeted recommendations for improving students' mastery of past tense forms in written English.

## Results

To address the research question regarding the types of error students make in writing recount texts using the past tense, the data obtained from the writing test were analysed based on the error analysis framework proposed by Dulay et al. (1982). According to this framework, language error is classified into four main types: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The writing test was held on Thursday, January, 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025 and was taken by 62 students from classes X.2 and X.4 with the topic "My past holiday". Having found the four types of error, a formula was used to calculate the percentage of each error. The percentage of each error is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Percentage of Errors

No	Types of Errors	Number of Errors	Percentage of Errors
1	Error of Omission	109	14.24%
2	Error of Addition	196	25.63%
3	Error of Misformation	412	53.85%
4	Error of Ordering	48	6.28%
Total Number of Errors		765	100%

## DISCUSSION

### 1. Types of errors

Based on the data analysis from the writing test, four main types of errors were found among tenth-grade students of MA Nurussalam Tetebatu in writing recount texts: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. This

classification refers to Dulay et al. (1982) surface taxonomy of errors.

### a) Error of omission

An error of omission occurs when a necessary element is absent from a well-formed utterance. In the context of writing recount texts, this error often relates to the omission of auxiliary verbs, articles, or conjunctions that are crucial for forming grammatically correct and coherent past tense sentences. As explained by Corder (1982), omission is one of the main error categories.

Examples of Omission Errors from Research Data:

#### 1) Omission of 'To Be' (as an auxiliary verb in the past continuous tense):

Error: "*I going to the beach*". Correction "*I was going to the beach*." This error indicates a lack of student understanding regarding the structure of the past continuous tense, where the form of 'to be' (was/were) must precede the present participle ('-ing' form). This aligns with Brown's (2000) theory stating that errors are signs that students have not mastered English rules, particularly concerning tense formation.

#### 2) Omission of Auxiliary Verb (to form the correct past tense):

Error: "*He want go to the store and bought some clothes*". Correction "*He wanted to go to the store and bought some clothes*." The student omitted the '-ed' suffix from the verb 'want', which should be 'wanted' to indicate the past tense of a regular verb. Additionally, the omission of 'to' before 'go' is also a grammatical error related to the infinitive form. This error signifies students' difficulty in applying the morphological rules of the past tense to regular verbs, an aspect emphasized in Brown's (2000) definition of error as an inability to master language rules.

#### 3) Omission of Article:

Error: "*We visited beach*". Correction "*We visited the beach*." The student omitted the definite article 'the' which is required before a specific noun. This error points to a weakness in understanding article usage, which is part of the linguistic elements that need to be mastered in writing, as stated by Phuket (2015) that writing requires mastery of various linguistic elements.

#### 4) Omission of Conjunction:

Error: "*I wanted to buy souvenirs; I didn't have enough money*". Correction: "*I wanted to*

*buy souvenirs, but I didn't have enough money." (Or "I wanted to buy souvenirs because I didn't have enough money," depending on the student's intended context). The student failed to use an appropriate conjunction to connect the two clauses, which should indicate a contrast or a cause-and-effect relationship. This reflects difficulty in constructing coherent complex sentences, a crucial aspect of "translating" ideas in to written text as outlined in Hayes and Flower's (1980) cognitive process model of writing.*

These omission errors, totalling 109 or 14.24%, indicate that students still have gaps in their basic grammatical knowledge, particularly in the sentence structure of the past tense, which is a key linguistic feature of recount texts (Gerrot & Wignel in Fitri, 2020).

#### **b) Error of addition**

An error of addition is characterized by the presence of an unnecessary element in a well-formed utterance. This contradicts the principle of efficiency in language and often indicates student confusion in applying grammatical rules. Corder (1982) also identified addition as one of the error categories.

Examples of Addition Errors from Research Data:

##### **1) Unnecessary Auxiliary Verbs:**

Error: *"I did went to the beach"*. Correction *"I went to the beach."* The addition of 'did' before 'went' is unnecessary because 'went' is already in the past tense form. This error suggests students might be attempting to apply rules for negative or interrogative sentences (did not go, did I go?) to affirmative sentences, indicating an overgeneralization of target language rules (intralingual error) as explained by Brown (1978).

##### **2) Unnecessary Prepositions:**

Error: *"We visited at the beach"*. Correction *"We visited the beach."* The verb 'visited' does not require the preposition 'at' when directly followed by a place object. This error may stem from first language interference (interlingual error) where students literally translate from Indonesian sentence structures, or a lack of understanding of verb-preposition collocations in English.

##### **3) Unnecessary Quantifiers:**

Error: *"We played a many games"*. Correction *"We played many games."* The use of both 'a' and 'many' together is grammatically

incorrect. This error shows a lack of student understanding of correct quantifier combinations.

#### **4) Incorrect Tense of Auxiliary Verb with Past Participle:**

Error: *"We are arrived at the home"*. Correction *"We arrived at the home."* (or *"We have arrived at the home."*) The use of 'are' (the present tense form of 'to be') with the past participle 'arrived' is inappropriate for indicating a completed action in the past. This error indicates students' inability to correctly form perfect tenses or simple past tense, which is an indication that students' interlanguage is still developing (Corder, 1967).

Addition errors totalled 196 or 25.63% of all errors, indicating that students tend to add unnecessary elements, possibly as a compensatory strategy or due to incorrect rule generalization.

#### **c) Error of Misformation**

Misformation are the most dominant type of error, accounting for 412 or 53.85% of the total errors. This error is characterized by the use of an incorrect form of a morpheme or structure. This frequently occurs in the formation of the past tense of irregular verbs, which is a common challenge for English learners.

Examples of Misformation Errors from Research Data:

##### **1) Incorrect Past Tense Forms (Irregular Verbs):**

- Error: *"I goed to the beach"*. Correction *"I went to the beach."* The student applied the regular past tense formation rule (-ed) to the irregular verb 'go'. This is a classic example of an intralingual error (Brown, 1978) where students overgeneralize rules they have learned. This error directly affects the use of the simple past tense, which is essential in recount texts.
- Error: *"She swim in the sea"*. Correction *"She swam in the sea."* The student used the base form 'swim' instead of the correct past tense form 'swam'. This shows a lack of mastery of irregular verb forms.
- Error: *"They eated delicious food"*. Correction *"They ate delicious food."* Similar to 'goed', the student applied the regular rule to 'eat'.
- Error: *"We buyed some food"*. Correction *"We bought some food"*. Another common error in the formation of irregular verb past tenses.

- Error: *"I seen a beautiful sunset"*. Correction *"I saw a beautiful sunset"*. The student used the past participle 'seen' as the simple past tense form. This indicates confusion between the simple past tense and the present perfect tense, both of which involve past forms of verbs.
- Error: *"They run on the beach"*. Correction *"They ran on the beach"*. The student used the base form 'run' instead of the correct past tense form 'ran'.

The high percentage of misformation errors indicates that students face significant difficulties in internalizing and applying the correct past tense forms, especially for irregular verbs. This reiterates the findings of previous research (e.g., Anita, 2015) which also found mis-formation to be a dominant error, and aligns with Brown's (2000) statement that errors are a sign that students have not mastered English rules.

#### d) Error of misordering

An error of misordering occurs when words or phrases are placed in the wrong order within a sentence. Although its percentage is the lowest (48 or 6.28%), this error can significantly hinder the clarity of sentence meaning.

Examples of Misordering Errors from Research Data:

#### 1) Object Placement Before Subject and Verb:

Error: *"Many photos they took"*. Correction *"They took many photos."* The typical English sentence structure is Subject-Verb-Object. The student reversed this order, which might be influenced by Indonesian sentence structures where objects can be placed at the beginning for emphasis. This is an example of an interlingual error (Brown, 1978).

#### 2) Object Pronoun Placement Before Subject and Incorrect Adverb Placement:

Error: *"My brother visited I last week"*. Correction: *"My brother visited me last week"*. Besides the ordering error (the object pronoun 'I' should be 'me'), the placement of the adverbial phrase 'last week' is also awkward. This involves errors in pronoun case and adverb placement, affecting sentence structure.

#### 3) Object Placement Before Subject and Verb with Interruption:

Error: *"Some souvenirs I bought at the market"*. Correction *"I bought some souvenirs*

*at the market"*. Similar to the first example, the object is placed at the beginning of the sentence. Although the prepositional phrase 'at the market' is correctly placed at the end, the main sentence structure remains incorrect.

#### 4) Object Placement Before Subject and Verb with Adjective:

Error: *"Delicious food we ate at the restaurant"*. Correction *"We ate delicious food at the restaurant."* The object ('Delicious food') is placed before the subject and verb. This again shows students' difficulty in adhering to standard English sentence structure.

Misordering errors, though the least frequent, highlight students' challenges in internalizing English syntax, which differs from their mother tongue.

## 2. The dominant error

Having found the percentage of each error, the most dominant error and the lowest errors can be seen in the table.

**Table 2.** Percentage of Errors

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Total Number of Errors		765	100%

Based on Table above, the most dominant type of error made by the tenth-grade students is misformation error, with a total of 412 errors or 53.85%. This means that more than half of the errors made by students were due to the incorrect use of morpheme forms or structures, especially in the formation of the past tense of irregular verbs.

The dominance of misformation errors is consistent with findings from previous studies, such as Anita's (2015) research which also identified misformation as the most frequent error (68.46%). This strengthens the idea that the formation of irregular past tenses is the most challenging area for students in writing recount texts. The primary cause of this error, as analyzed, is students' difficulty in accurately translating words and sentences from Indonesian to English, often translating word-for-word without considering correct English grammatical rules. This aligns with the concept of interlingual error explained by Brown (1978). However, the

lowest error type is misordering error, with 48 errors or 6.28%. This error still needs attention as it can hinder sentence clarity

### 3. The similarity and the differences with the previous studies result

This study shares some similarities and differences with previous studies focusing on student error analysis in the use of the past tense.

#### Similarities:

- 1) Focus on Past Tense in Recount Texts: Similar to the research by Anita (2015), Iswahyuni (2014), and Cholipah (2014), this study also focuses on error analysis in the use of the simple past tense in recount texts.
- 2) Error Classification Based on Surface Taxonomy: This study, like Anita (2015), uses Dulay et al. (1982) surface error taxonomy (omission, addition, misformation, and misordering) to classify error types.
- 3) Dominance of Misformation Errors: The finding of this study, showing misformation as the most dominant error type, is consistent with Anita's (2015) findings, which also identified misformation as the most frequent error. This reinforces the idea that irregular past tense formation is the most challenging area for students.

#### Differences:

- 1) Research Instrument: Although this study and previous studies both used writing tests, there are differences in the specific details of the writing tests administered.
- 2) Analysis Focus: This study specifically focuses on sentence patterns, tenses, and pronouns, while other studies might have slightly different focuses (e.g., Iswahyuni (2014) limited the problem only to types and sources of errors, and Cholipah (2014) also analyzed capitalization and word choice errors).
- 3) Research Gap Addressed: A significant difference raised in this research is the attempt to compare the results of manual error correction by the researcher with those generated by artificial intelligence (AI). This opens opportunities to delve deeper into the pedagogical implications of these findings, which were not discussed in previous studies. By understanding the types of errors commonly made by

students, educators can design more effective learning strategies to address student difficulties.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion and the data analysis of the previous chapter, two major conclusions can be drawn by the researcher. After analysing the results of students writing in recount text, four kinds of errors made by the tenth-grade students were found by the researcher. They were error of omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Misformation is the highest number of errors made by students, the second number is omission error, the third number is addition error, and the lowest number is misordering error. Moreover, based on the percentage of each error, the second conclusion can be drawn that error of misformation is the most dominantly made by the tenth-grade students of MA Nurussalam Tetebatu in writing recount text, while the lowest error made by the tenth-grade students is error of misordering. It is highly recommended to further explore the potential use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology in language error analysis. A comparative study between manual error analysis and the results generated by AI-powered correction tools could offer new insights into the efficiency and accuracy of technology in assisting the identification and classification of student errors. This could serve as a basis for developing more innovative teaching and assessment methods in the future.

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