ARGOPURO

Argopuro: Jurnal Multidisiplin Ilmu Bahasa
Vol 14 No 3 Tahun 2026
Online ISSN: 2988-6309

An Error Analysis on Students' Use of Past Tense in Writing Recount Texts at the Eighth Grade of MTs NW Lendang Bagik

Mubarrokah, Nurdani Yulian Ahmad, Sopian
Universitas English Education Department, Teacher Training and Education Faculty,
Universitas Doktor Nugroho Magetan, Indonesia
mubarokah02@gmail.com

Abstract

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi bentuk-bentuk kesalahan yang dilakukan oleh siswa kelas VIII MTs NW Lendang Bagik dalam menerapkan *simple past tense* pada penulisan *recount text* serta mengetahui faktor-faktor yang melatarbelakangi terjadinya kesalahan tersebut. Penelitian ini menerapkan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui tes menulis yang diikuti oleh 19 siswa, wawancara terhadap enam siswa yang dipilih, dan dokumentasi. Kesalahan siswa dianalisis berdasarkan *Surface Strategy Taxonomy* yang dikemukakan oleh (Dulay et al., 1982), meliputi *omission, addition, misformation,* dan *misordering*. Hasil analisis mengidentifikasi sebanyak 84 kesalahan, dengan rincian 27 *omission*, 13 *addition*, 43 *misformation*, dan satu *misordering*. Di antara keempat kategori tersebut, *misformation* menjadi jenis kesalahan yang paling banyak ditemukan. Faktor-faktor yang berkontribusi terhadap kesalahan meliputi pemahaman tata bahasa yang terbatas, kesulitan dalam menggunakan Verb 2 serta *was* dan *were*, pengaruh bahasa pertama, keterbatasan kosakata, dan kurangnya praktik menulis. Kesulitan dalam menggunakan Verb 2 ditemukan sebagai faktor yang paling berpengaruh. Temuan ini memperlihatkan bahwa siswa masih menghadapi kendala dalam menggunakan *simple past tense* secara akurat ketika menulis *recount text*.

Kata Kunci: Analisis Kesalahan, *Simple Past Tense*, *Recount Text*, Menulis

Abstract

This study investigated the errors committed by eighth-grade students of MTs NW Lendang Bagik when applying the simple past tense in recount text writing and examined the factors underlying these errors. A descriptive qualitative approach was adopted to conduct the research. The data were obtained from a writing test administered to 19 students, interviews with six selected students, and documentation. The students' errors were classified according to the Surface Strategy Taxonomy developed by (Dulay et al., 1982), comprising four categories: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The analysis identified a total of 84 errors, including 27 omissions, 13 additions, 43 misformations, and one misordering. Among these categories, misformation accounted for the highest number

Article History
Received: November 2026
Reviewed: November 2026
Published: November 2026
Plagirism Checker: No 235.223.443

Copyright : Author
Publish by : Argopuro

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License

Argopuro: Jurnal Multidisiplin Ilmu Bahasa
Vol 14 No 3 Tahun 2026
Online ISSN: 2988-6309

of errors. The factors associated with the errors included inadequate grammatical understanding, difficulties in selecting the appropriate Verb 2 forms and using *was* and *were*, first-language interference, insufficient vocabulary, and limited writing practice. Difficulties with Verb 2 were identified as the most influential factor. These findings suggest that students continue to encounter challenges in accurately employing the simple past tense when composing recount texts.
Keywords: Error Analysis, Simple Past Tense, Recount Text, Writing

INTRODUCTION

Writing remains a challenging skill for junior secondary school students, particularly in rural educational environments such as MTs NW Lendang Bagik. Several contextual factors, including geographical conditions, restricted access to learning materials, the availability of instructional media, and limited opportunities to encounter English in authentic situations, may hinder students' language development. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, the limited use of English in everyday communication reduces students' opportunities to practice the language naturally. As a productive language skill, writing involves several demanding processes, such as developing and organizing ideas, choosing suitable vocabulary, and using grammatical structures correctly. Students often struggle to apply grammatical principles in their written compositions, partly due to inadequate practice and limited reinforcement of grammar through meaningful communication (Ferdiyanto, 2023). Consequently, a discrepancy may emerge between students' knowledge of grammatical concepts and their ability to apply that knowledge in actual writing.

The Indonesian junior secondary school curriculum, particularly at the SMP/MTs level, requires students to acquire writing skills across different text genres, one of which is the recount text. This genre involves describing or retelling events that occurred in the past, making the appropriate application of the simple past tense essential. Despite this requirement, students frequently encounter problems when using past tense forms accurately. Errors in tense usage may affect the clarity of written messages and cause readers to misunderstand the intended meaning (Asyifa & Yazid, 2023). For this reason, mastering the appropriate use of the simple past tense is necessary to maintain grammatical accuracy and communicate past experiences clearly through writing.

Problems with the simple past tense can be observed in various grammatical errors, such as the selection of incorrect verb forms, the inappropriate use of *to be*, and the construction of sentences that do not follow the required grammatical patterns. Such errors may reflect students' incomplete understanding of grammatical rules and their difficulties in applying those rules consistently in written compositions. During the researcher's preliminary observation at MTs NW Lendang Bagik, students were found to have difficulty differentiating between *was* and *were* and frequently used *to be* incorrectly in their sentences. For instance, some students constructed sentences such as “I was go to school yesterday” and “She was is happy.” These examples illustrate difficulties in forming grammatically appropriate sentences and distinguishing between verbal and nominal sentence constructions in the past tense. Furthermore, these problems may indicate the influence of first-language structures on students' English sentence formation. Accordingly, a systematic investigation is necessary to identify the types of errors students produce and examine the factors that contribute to their occurrence.

Error analysis is a systematic approach used to identify, categorize, and investigate errors occurring in learners' language production. Through this approach, researchers can

Argopuro: Jurnal Multidisiplin Ilmu Bahasa
Vol 14 No 3 Tahun 2026
Online ISSN: 2988-6309

recognize patterns of recurring errors and explore the factors associated with them, such as first-language interference and inadequate grammatical knowledge. According to (Ilmiyah, 2025), error analysis serves to identify learners' difficulties and provides a foundation for explaining why particular errors occur. In the present study, errors in students' application of the simple past tense are examined through the Surface Strategy Taxonomy developed by (Dulay et al., 1982). This framework distinguishes four types of errors: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Applying these categories provides a systematic basis for identifying and analyzing grammatical errors in students' recount text compositions.

A number of previous studies have explored errors made by students when using the simple past tense (Listiani & Megawati, 2022), in their research entitled *"An Analysis of Students' Errors in Using Simple Past Tense,"* adopted a descriptive qualitative design and reported that misformation represented the most frequently occurring error category. Their findings also indicated that interlingual and intralingual factors contributed to the errors. In another study, (Firdausi, 2022), entitled *"Students' Errors in Using Simple Past Tense in Writing,"* applied a descriptive quantitative approach and identified four categories of errors: addition, misformation, omission, and misordering. Misformation constituted 57% of the identified errors, and insufficient writing practice was also found to contribute to students' difficulties. Similarly, (Putu et al., 2020), in *"Factors Affecting Students' Errors in Using Simple Past Tense,"* employed a qualitative approach and reported that inadequate knowledge of grammatical rules and limited opportunities for writing practice were associated with students' errors. Their research also emphasized the role of teaching methods in influencing grammatical accuracy. Furthermore, (Prasetyo et al., 2022), in *"Grammatical Errors in Writing Recount Texts,"* used a descriptive qualitative design supported by document analysis. Their results showed that incorrect verb forms and omission continued to occur frequently in students' written work.

Despite the contributions of these studies to understanding students' grammatical difficulties, differences can be identified in their respective research focuses (Firdausi, 2022; Listiani & Megawati, 2022) concentrated primarily on classifying students' errors, while (Putu et al., 2020) investigated the factors associated with grammatical errors. Although (Prasetyo et al., 2022) examined past tense errors in recount text writing, their study did not present a detailed and integrated examination of error classifications alongside their contributing factors within the specific context addressed by the present research. Moreover, the previous investigations were carried out in different educational environments. These differences indicate the need for further research that examines both the categories of errors and the factors underlying students' difficulties in applying the simple past tense when composing recount texts in a specific educational setting.

In response to this research gap, the current study investigates eighth-grade students at MTs NW Lendang Bagik. The investigation addresses two interconnected aspects: the types of errors students make when applying the simple past tense in recount text writing and the factors responsible for these errors. By examining error classifications and their contributing factors together within a single educational context, this research seeks to develop a context-specific understanding of students' grammatical difficulties. Accordingly, the study has two objectives: (1) to identify the types of errors students commit when using the past tense in recount text writing and (2) to investigate the factors that contribute to students' errors in applying the past tense.

RESEARCH METHOD

A descriptive qualitative approach was adopted to examine the types of errors eighth-grade students made when using the simple past tense in recount text writing and to investigate the factors underlying these errors. The study was carried out at MTs NW Lendang Bagik, East Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, in May 2026. The research participants included 19 eighth-grade

Argopuro: Jurnal Multidisiplin Ilmu Bahasa
Vol 14 No 3 Tahun 2026
Online ISSN: 2988-6309

students who completed a recount text writing task. Additionally, six students representing high, moderate, and low achievement levels were selected to participate in interviews.

Data were obtained through a writing test, interviews, and documentation. Students' written compositions were examined using the Surface Strategy Taxonomy developed by (Dulay et al., 1982), which distinguishes four error categories: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. The collected data were analyzed following the framework established by (Miles et al., 2014), comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Furthermore, the interviews provided additional information about the factors associated with students' errors in applying the simple past tense.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Types of Errors in the Use of Simple Past Tense

An examination of recount texts produced by 19 eighth-grade students at MTs NW Lendang Bagik revealed a total of 84 errors related to the use of the simple past tense. The errors were categorized according to the Surface Strategy Taxonomy developed by (Dulay et al., 1982), which comprises four classifications: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering.

No.	Types of Errors	Frequency
1	Omission	27
2	Addition	13
3	Misformation	43
4	Misordering	1
	Total	**84**

As presented in the table, misformation constituted the largest category, accounting for 43 errors. Omission followed with 27 occurrences, while addition accounted for 13 errors. Misordering appeared least frequently, with only one occurrence. This distribution demonstrates that students encountered various challenges in applying the simple past tense when composing recount texts, especially when choosing and using grammatically appropriate forms.

a. Omission

Omission occurs when learners fail to include grammatical elements necessary for constructing a complete sentence. In this study, 27 omission errors were identified in the students' recount texts. One instance appeared in the writing of Student 1:

“I was happy because I very beatiful.”

The grammatically corrected sentence is: “I was happy because I was very beautiful.”

In this sentence, the student failed to include the necessary form of *to be* before the adjective phrase “very beautiful.” This error suggests a difficulty in forming nominal sentences that describe past conditions. A comparable omission was found in Student 15's writing: “We very happy,” which should be written as “We were very happy.”

These examples demonstrate that some students did not consistently use *was* or *were* when constructing nominal sentences in the simple past tense. The occurrence of 27 omission errors further indicates that the appropriate use of *to be* remained a challenge for the students.

b. Addition

Argopuro: Jurnal Multidisiplin Ilmu Bahasa
Vol 14 No 3 Tahun 2026
Online ISSN: 2988-6309

Addition errors occur when students insert grammatical elements that are unnecessary or inappropriate for the intended sentence structure. The analysis of the students' recount texts revealed 13 errors belonging to this category.

The presence of these errors suggests that students sometimes incorporated grammatical forms that did not conform to the structures required by their intended sentences. Such patterns indicate difficulties in applying the rules governing the simple past tense appropriately. Therefore, students' grammatical problems involved not only the omission of required elements but also the inappropriate inclusion of additional forms.

Note: Specific examples of addition errors should be taken from the original Chapter IV analysis before this subsection is finalized.

c. Misformation

Misformation represented the most frequent category, accounting for 43 errors. This category refers to instances in which students substitute an incorrect grammatical form for the form required in a particular context.

The high frequency of misformation suggests that choosing and applying appropriate grammatical forms posed a considerable challenge for students composing recount texts. In particular, the findings identified difficulties in using the second form of verbs (Verb 2) as a major issue associated with students' errors.

Because recount texts focus on events that occurred in the past, students are expected to use appropriate past-tense verb forms when describing their experiences. However, difficulties in identifying and applying the correct forms may lead to grammatical inaccuracies in their sentences. The prevalence of misformation consequently reflects the challenges students faced in applying the simple past tense appropriately when narrating past events.

The analysis further indicates that students' difficulties were not confined to verb forms. Problems involving the use of *was* and *were* were also identified, suggesting that students needed to improve their understanding of the grammatical structures used to express past conditions and situations.

Note: Specific student sentences and their corrected versions should be obtained from the original Chapter IV analysis to provide direct evidence for this discussion.

d. Misordering

Only one misordering error was identified in the students' written compositions, making it the least frequent category in the analysis. Misordering refers to errors that arise when sentence elements are placed in an inappropriate sequence.

The limited occurrence of this category indicates that misordering was considerably less common than omission, addition, and misformation in the collected data. Nevertheless, the presence of this error suggests that arranging sentence elements correctly remained a potential difficulty when students constructed sentences using the simple past tense.

In general, the analysis revealed that misformation occurred most frequently, followed by omission, addition, and misordering. This distribution suggests that students' primary difficulties concerned the selection and application of appropriate grammatical forms, although errors involving missing and unnecessary elements were also evident in their writing.

2. Factors Contributing to Students' Errors

Interviews with six selected students were conducted to investigate the factors associated with their errors in using the simple past tense. The analysis identified six contributing factors: limited grammatical understanding, difficulties in using Verb 2 forms, difficulties in applying *was* and *were*, first-language influence, limited vocabulary knowledge, and insufficient writing practice.

a. Limited Understanding of Grammar

Insufficient understanding of grammatical rules was one factor associated with students' difficulties in producing grammatically accurate sentences. To write recount texts appropriately, students need to understand the structures used to describe events that

Argopuro: Jurnal Multidisiplin Ilmu Bahasa
Vol 14 No 3 Tahun 2026
Online ISSN: 2988-6309

occurred in the past. When their knowledge of these rules is inadequate, they may struggle to apply the simple past tense correctly in their written compositions.

b. Difficulties in Using Verb 2 Forms

Problems with using Verb 2 forms emerged as the most influential factor contributing to students' errors. Since recount texts describe past events, students must be able to identify and apply the appropriate past-tense forms when recounting their experiences.

The findings showed that students encountered difficulties in selecting the correct forms of verbs. This result corresponds with the substantial number of misformation errors found in their written work. The connection between these findings suggests that limited mastery of past-tense verb forms played an important role in the grammatical inaccuracies identified in students' recount texts.

c. Difficulties in Applying *Was* and *Were*

Another factor involved students' difficulties in using *was* and *were* appropriately in past-tense sentences. These forms are necessary for constructing nominal sentences that describe past conditions or situations. However, the students' writing contained instances in which the required forms were omitted or used incorrectly.

The omission errors identified in the written compositions provide evidence of these difficulties. The findings suggest that students needed to develop a clearer understanding of the functions of *was* and *were* in nominal sentence structures referring to the past.

d. First-Language Influence

The influence of students' first language was also identified as a contributing factor. Differences between the grammatical structures of students' first language and those of English may create difficulties when they construct sentences in English. Information obtained from the interviews indicated that first-language influence was among the factors associated with students' errors in applying the simple past tense.

e. Limited Vocabulary Mastery

Insufficient vocabulary knowledge also contributed to students' difficulties in composing recount texts. Expressing past experiences accurately requires students to possess adequate vocabulary, including knowledge of different verb forms. When their vocabulary knowledge is limited, students may encounter problems selecting words and grammatical forms that appropriately convey their intended meanings.

f. Lack of Writing Practice

Insufficient opportunities to practise writing constituted another factor associated with students' errors. Producing recount texts requires learners to apply their grammatical knowledge while expressing personal experiences in written form. Without adequate writing practice, students may find it difficult to apply the simple past tense consistently and accurately.

Overall, the interview findings revealed that students' errors were associated with several grammatical and learning-related factors, including limited grammatical understanding, difficulties with verb forms and *was* and *were*, first-language influence, inadequate vocabulary knowledge, and insufficient writing practice. Among these factors, difficulties in using Verb 2 forms were identified as the most influential.

g. Discussion of Findings

The results indicate that eighth-grade students at MTs NW Lendang Bagik experienced difficulties applying the simple past tense when composing recount texts. The analysis identified 84 errors distributed across four categories, with misformation accounting for the highest number of occurrences. The interview findings also revealed six factors associated with these errors, among which difficulties in using Verb 2 forms were considered the most influential.

The predominance of misformation suggests that students struggled particularly with selecting and applying the grammatical forms required by the context. Because recount texts describe events that have already occurred, the accurate use of past-tense verb forms is

Argopuro: Jurnal Multidisiplin Ilmu Bahasa
Vol 14 No 3 Tahun 2026
Online ISSN: 2988-6309

essential. When students have difficulty identifying or applying these forms, grammatical inaccuracies may appear in their written compositions. Accordingly, the identification of Verb 2 difficulties as the most influential contributing factor corresponds with the high frequency of misformation errors.

Omission constituted the second most frequent category. Examples involving the absence of *was* or *were* demonstrate that students also experienced problems constructing nominal sentences in the past tense. These findings indicate that their grammatical difficulties extended beyond the selection of verb forms to include the appropriate use of *to be*. Although addition and misordering occurred less frequently, both categories demonstrate that students also encountered difficulties incorporating grammatical elements appropriately and arranging words in the required sentence order.

The findings are consistent with previous studies discussed in this research, which identified difficulties in applying past-tense forms when students wrote recount texts. (Firdausi, 2022; Listiani & Megawati, 2022), for example, reported that misformation was the most prominent category of grammatical error. A similar pattern emerged in the present study, in which misformation accounted for the largest proportion of the 84 errors identified.

The contributing factors identified in this research also correspond with issues reported in previous studies, particularly inadequate grammatical understanding and insufficient writing practice. Nevertheless, the present investigation examined both error categories and their associated factors among eighth-grade students at MTs NW Lendang Bagik. By analyzing students' written compositions alongside interview data, this study provides a contextualized account of the grammatical errors identified and the factors associated with their occurrence.

In conclusion, students' difficulties in applying the simple past tense were associated with several grammatical and learning-related factors. Misformation was the most frequent category of error, while difficulties in using Verb 2 forms emerged as the most influential contributing factor. These findings emphasize the importance of examining both the grammatical errors present in students' writing and the factors that may explain their occurrence.

CONCLUSIONS

The results demonstrated that eighth-grade students at MTs NW Lendang Bagik produced 84 errors when applying the simple past tense in recount text writing. The errors were distributed across four categories: 27 omissions, 13 additions, 43 misformations, and one misordering. Among these categories, misformation occurred most frequently, suggesting that students encountered considerable challenges in choosing and applying grammatically appropriate forms in their written compositions.

Furthermore, the study identified six factors associated with students' errors: inadequate grammatical understanding, difficulties in using Verb 2 forms, problems applying *was* and *were*, first-language influence, limited vocabulary knowledge, and insufficient writing practice. Difficulties in using Verb 2 forms emerged as the most influential factor. These findings suggest that students' challenges involved not only the application of grammatical rules but also their ability to select and use appropriate past-tense forms when describing previous experiences.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Above all, the researcher expresses profound gratitude to Allah SWT for His countless blessings and strength throughout the process of completing this research article. Special appreciation is extended to the first supervisor, Sopian, M.Pd. and the second supervisor, Nurdani Yulian Ahmad, M.Pd. BI. for their insightful comments, constructive recommendations, and dedicated assistance during the research process. The researcher also wishes to thank the principal, English teacher, and eighth-grade students of MTs NW Lendang Bagik for their valuable cooperation and involvement in the data collection process. Lastly, sincere

Argopuro: Jurnal Multidisiplin Ilmu Bahasa
Vol 14 No 3 Tahun 2026
Online ISSN: 2988-6309

appreciation is addressed to the researcher's family for their constant prayers, motivation, and wholehearted support throughout her academic journey.

REFRENCES

Asyifa, D. I., & Yazid, M. F. (2023). An Error Analysis on the Use of Past Tense in Recount Text. *Prologue: Journal on Language and Literature*, *9*(2), 352–362. https://doi.org/10.36277/jurnalprologue.v9i2.119

Dulay, H., Burt, M., & Krashen, S. (1982). *Language Two*. Oxford University Press.

Ferdiyanto, F. (2023). An Error Analysis on Using Simple Past Tense in Writing English. *Interlingua Journal*. https://ejournal.unzah.ac.id/index.php/interling/article/view/1413

Firdausi, N. (2022). Error Analysis of Using Past Tenses in 8th Graders' Recount Text. *ETNOLINGUAL*, *6*(1). https://e-journal.unair.ac.id/ETNO/article/view/34061

Ilmiyah, A. (2025). An Analysis of Grammatical Errors in the Use of Simple Past Tense in Recount Text. *Prosiding Nasional*. https://prosiding.ikippgribojonegoro.ac.id/index.php/Smpipp/article/view/3150

Listiani, A. P., & Megawati, F. (2022). An Error Analysis on Past Tense in Recount Text Written by Lower Secondary School Students. *International Social Sciences and Humanities*. https://doi.org/10.32528/issh.v2i1.127

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*. SAGE Publications.

Prasetyo, N., Saehu, A., & Sundari, H. (2022). Grammatical Errors in Writing Recount Texts (A Case Study at The First Year of Senior High School). *EDUKATIF : JURNAL ILMU PENDIDIKAN*, *4*(5), 7086–7096. https://doi.org/10.31004/edukatif.v4i5.4000

Putu, N., Marylena, I., Manik, C., Komang, N., & Suwastini, A. (2020). *Analyzing Grammatical Error in Students ' Recount Text Writing in Junior High School*. *24*(July), 238–246.