Sindoro
CENDIKIA PENDIDIKAN
ISSN: 3025-6488

Vol. 18 No 12, Tahun 2026
Palagiarism Check 02/234/67/78

AN ERROR ANALYSIS ON STUDENTS' USE OF PRESENT TENSE: COMMON MISTAKE AND IMPLICATION FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AT THE EIGHTH GRADE OF SMP ISLAM RAUDATUL JANNAH NW BUNDUA

Susi Khorunnisa[1], Sopian[2], Nurdani Yulian Ahmad[3]
Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Doktor Nugroho Magetan
Uchyy554@gmail.com, sopian@udn.ac.id, nurdaniyuliana@udn.ac.id

Abstrak

Penguasaan *Simple Present Tense* merupakan dasar penting dalam komunikasi bahasa Inggris sehari-hari. Namun, masih banyak siswa yang mengalami kesulitan gramatikal dalam menyusun kalimat menggunakan tata bahasa ini. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis kesalahan yang dilakukan oleh siswa kelas VIII SMP Islam Raudatul Jannah NW Bundua dalam menggunakan *Present Tense*, faktor-faktor penyebab kesalahan tersebut, serta implikasinya terhadap pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes tertulis, wawancara, dan dokumentasi yang melibatkan 19 siswa, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan *Surface Strategy Taxonomy* dari Dulay et al. (1982). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan terdapat 87 kesalahan yang terdiri atas 8 *omission*, 5 *addition*, 32 *misformation*, dan 42 *misordering*. *Misordering* merupakan jenis kesalahan yang paling sering ditemukan. Hasil wawancara menunjukkan bahwa kesalahan tersebut terutama disebabkan oleh keterbatasan pemahaman terhadap aturan tata bahasa, kebingungan dalam penggunaan *auxiliary verbs*, keterbatasan kosakata, dan kurangnya latihan berbahasa Inggris. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa guru perlu memberikan pembelajaran tata bahasa yang lebih jelas, kontekstual, serta menyediakan lebih banyak kesempatan bagi siswa untuk berlatih.

Kata Kunci: Analisis Kesalahan, Simple Present Tense, Kesalahan Siswa, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris.

Abstract

Mastering the Simple Present Tense is essential because it forms the basis of everyday English communication. However, many students still experience grammatical difficulties when constructing Simple Present Tense sentences. Therefore, this study aimed to identify the types of errors made by the eighth-grade students of SMP Islam Raudatul Jannah NW Bundua in using the Present Tense, the factors causing these errors, and their implications for English language learning. This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. The data were collected through written tests, interviews, and documentation involving 19 students and analyzed using Dulay et al.'s (1982) Surface Strategy Taxonomy. The findings revealed 87 error occurrences consisting of 8 omission errors, 5 addition errors,

Article History
Received: November 2026
Reviewed: November 2026
Published: November 2026

Plagirism Checker No 2634

Copyright : Author
Publish by : Sindoro

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

32 misformation errors, and 42 misordering errors. Misordering was the most frequent error, followed by misformation, omission, and addition. The interview results indicated that the errors were mainly caused by limited understanding of grammatical rules, confusion in using auxiliary verbs, limited vocabulary, and lack of English practice. These findings imply that teachers should provide clearer grammar instruction, contextual learning activities, and more opportunities for students to practice using the Simple Present Tense accurately.

***Keywords**: Error Analysis, Simple Present Tense, Students' Errors, English Language Learning.*

INTRODUCTION

English has become an international language that plays a pivotal role in communication, education, technology, and global interaction. According to Crystal (2003), English functions as a *lingua franca* that enables communication between speakers who do not share the same first language. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language and has a crucial role in the educational context, focusing on the development of four main language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, the successful acquisition of these skills is highly influenced by students' understanding of grammar. Grammar, as defined by Thornbury (1999), is "the way language manipulates and combines words to form longer units of meaning". Azar (2003) emphasizes that grammar mastery is essential because students may face significant difficulties in understanding and producing meaningful sentences without sufficient grammatical knowledge.

One of the most fundamental aspects of English grammar is tense, specifically the Simple Present Tense, which is used to express habits, routines, general truths, and repeated actions. Although it is considered a basic structure, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students still experience profound difficulties in using it correctly in both spoken and written communication. These difficulties frequently manifest as grammatical errors such as omitting the *-s/-es* suffix for third-person singular subjects, adding unnecessary elements, using incorrect verb forms, and misordering sentence structures. James (1998) notes that tense-related errors are among the most common errors made by English learners, often stemming from first language (L1) interference, incomplete knowledge of target language rules, or ineffective communication strategies.

Based on a preliminary observation conducted at SMP Islam Raudatul Jannah NW Bundua, it was found that eighth-grade students consistently experienced difficulties in using the Simple Present Tense correctly. Students frequently produced structurally flawed sentences such as *"He go to school every day," "She play volleyball," "They is happy,"* and *"I am go to school"* in classroom activities. These errors predominantly occurred in subject-verb agreement, the application of auxiliary verbs (*do/does*), and the correct usage of the *to be* verbs. Furthermore, because the school operates as a pesantren-based institution, students have limited exposure to English outside the classroom, communicating primarily in Indonesian and the local Sasak language in their daily lives. Consequently, grammar teaching often leans toward the

memorization of rules and formulas rather than communicative practice, causing students to repeat the same errors continuously.

To address these challenges, Error Analysis (EA) serves as an effective diagnostic and pedagogical tool. Corder (1974) emphasized that learner errors are significant to teachers, researchers, and learners themselves, as they reveal the underlying hypotheses learners construct about the language. Therefore, this study aims to systematically identify and classify the types of errors made by eighth-grade students in using the Simple Present Tense based on Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982) Surface Strategy Taxonomy, analyze the factors contributing to these errors, and formulate their implications for English language learning at SMP Islam Raudatul Jannah NW Bundua.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design, aiming to describe and analyze systematically, factually, and accurately the grammatical phenomena experienced by the students. According to Bogdan & Biklen (1992) and Moleong (2017), qualitative research emphasizes understanding the social context and process holistically rather than yielding numerical results. The research design is deeply rooted in the Error Analysis framework proposed by Corder (1974), which includes the collection of samples, identification of errors, classification of errors, explanation of errors, and evaluation.

The research was conducted at SMP Islam Raudatul Jannah NW Bundua, located in Dusun Bundua, Jago Village, Praya Kota District, Central Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province, during July 2026 for the 2025/2026 academic year. The research subjects were eighth-grade students. Although the total population of the class was 22 students, only 19 students participated in the written test due to the absence of three students. The subjects were selected using purposive sampling, considering that eighth-grade students are at a transitional stage of grammatical development and continue to use the Present Tense in various learning contexts.

Data were gathered through three primary instruments: written tests, interviews, and documentation.

1. **Written Test:** Acting as the primary instrument (Heaton, 1988), the test consisted of three sections: (a) arranging scrambled words into correct Simple Present Tense sentences; (b) identifying and correcting grammatical errors in given sentences; and (c) writing a short independent paragraph (5-7 sentences) about daily routines or habitual activities.
2. **Interview:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the eighth-grade English teacher and six selected students. The students were purposefully categorized into three ability levels based on their test performance: High Ability (S1, S18), Medium Ability (S3, S11), and Low Ability (S12, S19).
3. **Documentation:** This included students' test papers, the English syllabus, lesson plans, and classroom activity photographs to ensure data validity.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The grammatical errors found in the written tests were strictly classified using the *Surface Strategy*

Taxonomy (Dulay et al., 1982), which categorizes errors into Omission, Addition, Misformation, and Misordering.

RESULTS

Types of Errors Made by Students The analysis of the written test responses from the 19 students (coded as S1 to S19) revealed a total of 87 classifiable error occurrences in the use of the Simple Present Tense. The findings were categorized based on Dulay et al.'s (1982) Surface Strategy Taxonomy as follows:

Table 1: Types of Errors Identified in Students' Written Tests

No.	Types of Errors	Errors Found
1	Omission	8
2	Addition	5
3	Misformation	32
4	Misordering	42
Total		**87**

1. Misordering Errors (42 occurrences) Misordering emerged as the most dominant error. This occurs when necessary linguistic elements are present but placed in an incorrect sequence.

- **Example 1 (S5):** In a scrambled word task, Student S5 wrote *"We at school English study"* instead of the correct form *"We study English at school"*. The student incorrectly positioned the prepositional phrase and object before the main verb.
- **Example 2 (S16):** Student S16 wrote *"They football play every weekend"* instead of *"They play football every weekend"*. Here, the object (*football*) was incorrectly placed before the main verb (*play*). These findings reveal that organizing subjects, verbs, objects, and adverbs into an appropriate English syntactic sequence poses the greatest challenge for students.

2. Misformation Errors (32 occurrences) Misformation was the second most frequent error, happening when students used the wrong grammatical form or marker.

- **Example 1 (S2):** Student S2 wrote *"I studies English every night"* instead of *"I study English every night"*. The student incorrectly applied the third-person singular suffix *-s* to a first-person singular subject.
- **Example 2 (S14):** Student S14 wrote *"After school I am sleep"* instead of *"After school, I sleep"*. The student incorrectly combined the *to be* verb (*am*) with the lexical verb

(*sleep*). This high frequency indicates that while students know a sentence requires a verb, they severely struggle with subject-verb agreement and distinguishing between verbal and nominal sentences.

3. Omission Errors (8 occurrences) Omission occurs when students leave out grammatical elements necessary for structural accuracy.

- **Example 1 (S8):** Student S8 wrote *"I usually 07.00"* omitting the required predicate/main verb completely (e.g., *wake up*).
- **Example 2 (S12):** Student S12 wrote *"She goes school every day"* instead of *"She goes to school every day,"* omitting the necessary preposition *"to"*.

4. Addition Errors (5 occurrences) Addition is the insertion of an unnecessary element into a sentence.

- **Example 1 (S4):** Student S4 wrote *"They does not plays football"* instead of *"They do not play football"*. Aside from the auxiliary error (*does*), the student unnecessarily added the *-s* suffix to the main verb after a negative auxiliary.
- **Example 2 (S6):** Student S6 wrote *"I wake up at the 03.30"* instead of *"I wake up at 03.30,"* adding an unnecessary article (*the*) before a specific clock time.

Factors Causing Students' Errors Based on the semi-structured interviews with the English teacher and the six selected students across ability levels, four main factors underlying these grammatical errors were identified:

1. Limited Understanding of Grammatical Rules: Students struggled to internalize rules regarding verb forms and subject-verb agreement (intralingual transfer). S1 (High Ability) noted, *"Yang sulit itu kata kerjanya, kadang lupa pakai s atau es"* (The verb is difficult, sometimes I forget to use s or es). The English teacher verified this limitation: *"Seringnya di kata kerja. Kadang lupa s/es, terus do sama does juga masih tertukar"* (It is often the verb. Sometimes they forget s/es, and do and does are still mixed up).

2. Confusion in Using Auxiliary Verbs: Students experienced profound confusion distinguishing when to use *do* versus *does* in negative and interrogative structures. S2 stated, *"Do sama does. Kadang kebalik"* (Do and does. Sometimes they are reversed). The teacher added, *"Kalau do/does masih sering tertukar. Kalau to be ndak terlalu, cuma kadang masih ada yang salah"*.

3. Limited Vocabulary: A lack of lexical resources heavily restricted students' ability to produce independent sentences. S3 (Medium Ability) admitted, *"Banyak yang ndak tahu artinya"* (I don't know the meaning of many words). Lower-ability students echoed this, with S5 stating, *"Ndak tahu artinya, terus ndak tahu mau nulis apa"* (I don't know the meaning, so I don't know what to write). The teacher noted that restricted vocabulary severely hindered sentence construction.

4. Lack of Practice and Exposure to English:

Students had negligible exposure to English outside of formal classroom settings. S18 (High Ability) stated they only practiced English *"Kalau ada tugas saja"* (Only if there are assignments). S6 stated they *"Ndak pernah"* (Never) use it at home. The teacher highlighted the sociolinguistic environment: *"Jarang sih. Sehari-hari mereka lebih sering pakai bahasa Sasak*

atau Bahasa Indonesia" (Rarely. Every day they use Sasak or Indonesian language more often). Without regular application, declarative grammar knowledge quickly faded.

DISCUSSION

T he findings of this study, mapping 87 error occurrences across 19 students, align with Dulay et al.'s (1982) Surface Strategy Taxonomy and validate Corder's (1974) perspective that errors are not merely failures, but diagnostic reflections of learners' internal language processing.

The dominance of **Misordering (42 occurrences)** is the most distinctive finding of this study. While previous researchers such as Sasmiasih (2014) and Siregar & Zuriani (2020) highlighted omissions of *-s/-es* and misformations (e.g., incorrect *to be* usage) as dominant error traits in Present Tense acquisition, the present study reveals that students at SMP Islam Raudatul Jannah NW Bundua struggle fundamentally with English syntax and word order. This misordering is a classic symptom of interlingual interference (Brown, 2021), where students linearly translate sentences from Indonesian or Sasak into English without adjusting for syntactic structural differences (e.g., placing objects before verbs).

Misformation (32 occurrences) was the second highest, supporting the findings of Ramadhani (2020) and Anggraeni (2022), who also found students frequently confusing verb forms, auxiliary verbs (*do/does*), and subject-verb agreement. This highlights an intralingual error (Brown, 2021) stemming from an overgeneralization of rules or incomplete application of the target language system. For instance, applying the third-person singular suffix to a first-person subject (*I studies*) shows that the student knows the rule exists but fails to comprehend its contextual limitation.

Implications for English Language Learning The convergence of the written test data and interview findings generated four vital pedagogical implications for teaching the Simple Present Tense:

1. **The Need for More Contextual and Explicit Grammar Instruction:** Memorizing formulas (e.g., S + V1 + O) is deeply inadequate. Instruction must be highly contextual, utilizing students' daily routines to demonstrate *why* and *how* subject-verb agreement changes.
2. **Increased Practice in Independent Sentence Construction:** Because misordering was the highest error type, students require rigorous practice moving beyond fill-in-the-blanks. They must actively practice syntactic structuring—arranging subjects, verbs, and adverbial phrases independently to break the habit of L1 translation.
3. **Integration of Vocabulary Development with Grammar Learning:** Grammar cannot be taught in a vacuum. As students noted their inability to write because they "didn't know the words," teachers must equip students with relevant lexical sets (e.g., action verbs related to daily chores) simultaneously with tense instruction.
4. **Continuous Corrective Feedback and Reinforcement:** Teachers must utilize error analysis pedagogically (James, 1998). By identifying that misordering and misformation are recurring pitfalls, teachers can provide targeted, specific feedback, rather than generic corrections, ultimately fostering students' metalinguistic awareness.

CONCLUSION

Based on the descriptive qualitative analysis of eighth-grade students at SMP Islam Raudatul Jannah NW Bundua, it is concluded that students face substantial difficulties in mastering the Simple Present Tense, producing 87 total errors. Misordering was the most frequent error (42 occurrences), followed by misformation (32), omission (8), and addition (5). These grammatical errors were driven by four interconnected factors: a limited understanding of grammatical rules (specifically subject-verb agreement), profound confusion in using auxiliary verbs (*do*/*does*), severe vocabulary limitations, and an acute lack of English practice and exposure outside of the formal classroom environment.

To effectively overcome these challenges, English teachers must adopt teaching strategies that prioritize contextualized grammar instruction, heavily integrate vocabulary building into grammar tasks, provide extensive opportunities for independent sentence construction to correct syntactic misordering, and deliver targeted corrective feedback based on students' specific recurring errors.

SUGGESTION

For English teachers, it is highly recommended to shift from theoretical rule memorization to communicative, contextual grammar practice, focusing heavily on sentence arrangement and subject-verb agreement. For students, proactive efforts to expand vocabulary and practice English sentences outside of mandatory assignments are crucial for internalizing grammar rules. For future researchers, investigating teaching methods or experimental interventions (such as interactive syntax games) designed specifically to reduce misordering and misformation errors in junior high school settings is highly encouraged.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful, all praise and gratitude belong to Allah SWT for His grace and guidance throughout the completion of this research. The authors express sincere appreciation to the Rector of Universitas Doktor Nugroho Magetan, the Dean of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, and the Head of the English Education Study Program for their continuous support and direction. Deepest gratitude is also extended to the Headmaster, English teacher, and the eighth-grade students of SMP Islam Raudatul Jannah NW Bundua for their full cooperation and participation during the data collection process.

REFERENCES

Anggraeni, R. (2022). Error Analysis on Students' Use of Tenses in Recount Text Writing at SMP Islam Al-Azhar Medan. *Indonesian Journal of EFL Studies*, 5(1), 83.

Arikunto, S. (2019). *Prosedur Penelitian*. PT. Rineka Cipta.

Azar, B. S. (2003). *Understanding and Using English Grammar*. Pearson Education.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1992). *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods*. Allyn and Bacon.

Brown, H. D. (2021). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (7th ed.). Pearson Education.

Corder, S. P. (1974). *Error Analysis and Interlanguage*. Oxford University Press.

Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge University Press.

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

Ellis, R. (1997). *Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford University Press.

Heaton, J. B. (1988). *Writing English Language Tests*. Longman.

James, C. (1998). *Errors in Language Learning and Use: Exploring Error Analysis*. Longman.

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

Moleong, L. J. (2017). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*. PT Remaja Rosdakarya.

Ramadhani, N. P. (2020). An Error Analysis on the Use of Simple Present Tense in Students' Writing at the Second Grade of SMPN 1 Palembang. *Journal of English Language and Education*, 6(2), 64.

Sasmiasih, E. (2014). Error Analysis on the Students' Writing of Descriptive Text. *Journal of English Language Teaching*, 2(1), 45.

Siregar, H., & Zuriani, M. (2020). Students' Error in Using Simple Present Tense. *PROJECT (Professional Journal of English Education)*, 3(3), 379.

Sugiyono. (2018). *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan: Pendekatan Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*. Alfabeta.

Thornbury, S. (1999). *How to Teach Grammar*. Longman.