

## Students' Error In Using Simple Present Tense Mastery

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**Abstract.** *This paper is to know the students' error in using simple present tense. The data were the second semester students' structure 1 final written examination answer. After analyzing the second semester students' structure 1 answer, it was found that the students made error in using simple present tense. These errors are categorized into omission, addition, misordering and misformation. The most errors made by the students are misformation error.*

**Key words:** *simple present tense; error analysis*

### A. INTRODUCTION

Talking about English language, it cannot be separated from the role and the use of English language itself in certain countries. The role and the use of English language will determine the use and the fluency of English itself. The people of the countries who always use English as their daily communication will be different in their English mastery from those who do not use English as their daily communication.

As it is known that there are many countries around the world that use English language differently for their people who live in. Kahru and Nelson (2011) said that the diffusion of English has resulted in the emergency of three broad categories of regional varieties of English. The first set includes the varieties in the countries where the English language has its origins and those where it is the

dominant language as a result primarily of population migration, e.g. Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the USA, which were inhabited by migrations of English speaking people in large numbers from the British Isles. The second set comprises the varieties that have developed in countries where English has a long history, essentially due to colonization, in which the language undergone acculturation and nativization, has a body of creative writing, and has an official status, e.g. India, Nigeria, Singapore, the Philippines, and others. The third set consists of the varieties that are developing in countries where English is used primarily for international purposes, but is fast becoming an instrument of identity construction and artistic innovation (e.g. in the People's Republic of China, Japan and Korea). These three sets have been termed the Inner-circle, the Outer circle and Expanding Circle Varieties in the Concentric Circles Models.

Based on the circle countries varieties, Indonesia is a country which is included into expanding circle countries varieties, like China, Japan and Korea because the people of Indonesia do not use English as their daily communication. They use English only for very certain and specific purposes, like requirement to go to abroad or continue studying at certain national or international higher education or to apply the international factories.

Besides this category, it can also be said that English language in Indonesia is as a foreign language. The people of Indonesia always use Indonesian language or tribal language such as Japanese, Sundanese and the other tribal languages for their daily communication. Therefore, it is usual for Indonesian students as the English language learners find difficulties in learning and using English. Moreover, there are many language components and language skills of English language that should be learned and mastered by the students. The forms and structural distinctions between Indonesian language and English language can cause the students as the English language learners make some English grammatical errors. It means that the Indonesian students may find difficulties in

using the correct English form and correct English structure. This may also be because of their lack knowledge or the influence of their first language or mother tongue on the acquisition of the new language structures or new target language structures, like English language.

When students' English learning is still influenced by their mother tongue or their first language, they will often experience lots of problems in grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and so forth, especially in forming and arranging words into correct forms or sentences.

Grammar is one aspect of the language components that should be learned and mastered by Indonesian students who learn and use a language, like English. Grammar is one crucial language component that makes language understandable by the language users both in oral and written form. Gerotand Wignell (1994) state that grammar is a theory of a language, of how language is put together and how it works.

Brown also (2001) argues that grammar competence as a major component of communication has an important position and tenses which are considered as the most difficult skill to learn for the Indonesian students. In tenses, the language learners or the writers have to combine and relate some parts of grammar, like subject, adverbs, articles, auxiliary verbs, objects, adjectives, verbs, conjunction and so forth.

One of the grammars components that has to be learned and mastered by the Indonesian students as the English language learners is tenses. There are sixteen tenses divisions in English language with their own complexity on specific verb form changes and uses in sentences or utterances. It is different from Indonesian language that there are no tenses and no specific verb form changes and uses in sentences.

Simple present tense is one of the English tenses which is usually used by the English language users both in speaking and writing. The use of simple present tense is still confusing for the second semester students of English Education Department of Higher Education of Teacher Training and Education of Muhammadiyah Pringsewu Lampung because of the complexity of the forms and the uses of simple present tense itself.

Simple present tense relates to the daily activities and to talk about the general truth. The simple present tense is the tense that has specific characteristics. These characteristics can be seen from the function and the form of the simple present tense. It has the agreement of the subject and the verb or the predicate. The function of the simple present tense is to show about the daily activities and general truth and to show time table as well. The form of the simple present tense is subject + infinitive + object (S + Infinitive + Object).

The second semester students of English Department of Higher Education of Teacher Training and Education of Muhammadiyah Pringsewu Lampung have to be able to use all of the tenses in English including simple present tense. This tense has been stated on the syllabus or basic course outline (BCO) of structure 1 (basic structure) which is arranged by the lecturer of this subject before teaching and learning occur. This subject has 2 (two) credits, so the students have one meeting a week. The students have got lots of supporting practice to support the structure subject, like in doing writing skill besides the module which is provided by the structure 1 (basic structure) lecturer.

There are many grammarians who define and talk about simple present tense in term of the use and the form of the simple present tense itself. Simple present tense or present simple (present simple is the term taken from Murphy: 1987) is the tense of English that is used to talk about thing in general. Murphy also (1987)

said that we use the present simple to talk about thing in general. We are not thinking only about the present. We use it to say that something happens all the time or repeatedly, or something is true in general. It is not important whether the action is happening at the time of speaking. The examples of simple present tense: the earth goes around the sun, nurses look after patients in hospital, in Britain most of the shop close at 5.30 p.m. Another opinion is given by Murthy (2003) who said that when the verb is used to show that an action takes place at present. The examples of simple present tense: He speaks English well.

It is supported by Swan (2000) who said that when we talk about permanent situations, or about things that happen regularly or all the time (not around now), we usually use the simple present. Examples: I go to London about three times a week. From these grammarians' definitions, it is clear that the simple present tense is the activities or the actions which are done by the subject all of the time. It does not mean in temporary time but whenever and wherever.

In another occasion, Azar (2006) adds that in general, the simple present expresses events or situations that exist always, usually, habitually; they exist now, have existed in the past, and probably will exist in the future.

#### a. Forms

The simple present tense has a specific characteristic. This characteristic can be seen from the form and the use of the simple present itself. Swan (2000) said that the forms of the simple present tense is as follows:

Table 1. Forms of the Simple Present Tense

Affirmative	Question	Negative
I work	Do I work?	I do not work
You work	Do you work?	I do not work
He/she/it works	Does he/she/it work?	He/she/it does not work
They work	Do they work?	They do not work

Table 2. Spelling of Third Person Singular Forms

Most verbs: Add -s to infinitive	Work -----→ <b>works</b> Sit -----→ <b>sits</b> Stay -----→ <b>stays</b>
Verbs ending in consonants + y: change y to <i>i</i> and add -es	Cry -----→ <b>cries</b> Hurry -----→ <b>hurries</b> Reply -----→ <b>replies</b>
Verbs ending in -s, -z, -ch, -sh, or -x: add -es to infinitive	Miss -----→ <b>misses</b> Buzz -----→ <b>buzzes</b> Watch -----→ <b>watches</b> Push -----→ <b>pushes</b> Fix -----→ <b>fixes</b>
Exceptions:	Have -----→ <b>has</b> Go -----→ <b>goes</b> Do -----→ <b>does</b>

From the table 1 and table 2, it is clear that the form of simple present tense is marked or indicated by the changing and adding the letter “s” or the letters “es” at the final or the end of the infinitive but most of the verbs are added by “s”. The addition and change of the final infinitive depend on the final letter of the infinitive. If the verbs end with consonants + y: change y to *i* and add -es and when verbs end in -s, -z, -ch, -sh, or -x: add -es to infinitive. The change of the final letter of infinitive also depends on the subject of the verb itself. When the subject comes from the singular third subject, the final verb has to be changed by “s or es”.

As what has been stated at paragraph above, it is clear that English language in Indonesia is regarded as the foreign language. It means that the Indonesian people do not use English as their daily communication and interaction. They only use English language at very limited time and occasion. In using the foreign language, the language users sometimes make any mistake or error.

In line with error, Dulay, et al. (1982) stated that error as flawed side of learner speech of writing. They are those parts of conversation of composition that deviate from some selected norm of mature language performance. Brown (2007) also stated that error as noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the inter-language competence of learner. Error is wrong response because the students do not have knowledge about what is right answer is, while mistake is wrong response that if the students thought about it they would realize what the right answer is. Brown (2007) said that a mistake is performance of error that is either the random guess or slip, in that it is failure to utilize a known system correctly.

There are types of error given by the linguists. Dulay, et al (1982) noted the descriptive classification of errors covered four main types of errors. They are linguistic category, surface strategy, comparative analysis, and communicative effect. Error types based on linguistic category classify the error by combining the language components include phonology(pronunciation), syntax, and morphology (grammar), semantics and lexicon (meaning and vocabulary), discourse (style) with particular linguistic constituent the error effects include the elements that comprise each language component. Error based on surface strategy taxonomy, in this type of error, the learners may omit necessary items or add unnecessary one; they may misform items or misorder them. Omission, these errors are categorized by the omitting item that should be appeared in a well-formed utterance. Although any morpheme or word in a sentence is a potential candidate for omission, some types of morphemes are omitted more than others. Example: I saw two bird on the tree. The language users omit the plural indicator -s at the final of the word bird. Addition, this error is opposite of omissions. These errors are categorized by the presence of an item which must not appear in a well-formed utterance. It is divided into three types: double marking, this addition is described as the failure delete certain items which are required some linguistic constructions, but not in others. Example: We didn't went there. Regularization, a rule typically added to a

linguistic item is erroneously added to exceptional of the given class that do not take a marker. Simple addition, if addition error is not a double marking or regularization it is called simple addition. No particular features characterize simple addition other than those that characterize all addition errors. The fishes doesn't live in the water. Misformation, these errors are characterized by the use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure. In misformation errors, the learner supplies something, although it is incorrect. The dog eated the chicken. Misordering is characterized by the incorrect placement of a morphology or group of morphemes in an utterance. Examples: What daddy is doing? He is all the time late.

Talking about error, it relates to what is called error analysis. Brown (2007) said that error analysis is the fact that 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 surge of study of learners' errors."

Error analysis is one of the vital things in language teaching because the language teacher knows the lack of the students as the language learner. From the error made by the students, the language teacher should analyze and identify the error made by the students which is useful for giving feedback in designing the language teaching and learning process. Fisiak (1981) said that error analysis was conceived and performed for its feedback value in designing pedagogical materials and strategies.

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study is descriptive qualitative method. It was conducted by collecting the data which were taken from the natural situation without altering the situation anyway. The class was supervised by the examination supervisor. The data were taken from the students' written answer of the structure 1 (basic structure) in final examination.



This study was conducted at English Department of Higher Education of Teacher Training and Education of *Muhammadiyah Pringsewu Lampung*. The data were in the form of the students' sentences in answering the structure 1 questions. The students have to make the types of the sentences in the form of simple present tense both in verbal and nominal forms. The source of the data was the 57 second semester students of English Department of Higher Education of Teacher Training and Education of *Muhammadiyah Pringsewu Lampung* in the academic year 2015-2016.

In analyzing the data of this study, the researcher used the following steps. Firstly, the researcher made a list of the students' errors in using the simple present tense based on the students' answer, and then checked the sentences that the students made whether they used the simple present tense appropriately, correctly or not. Finally, the researcher classified the students' errors in using simple present tense individually and then continued by calculating their percentages of the errors individually.

### C. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

#### *Finding*

From the data collection, there were 428 errors in using simple present tense made by the students. The errors found were analyzed using the surface strategy taxonomy proposed by Dulay et.al. (1982). Thus, the errors were classified into errors of omission, errors of addition, errors of misformation, and errors of misordering.

This research only focused on the analysis of errors in using simple present tense and the other errors which were not included to simple present tense were ignored. However, the researcher only presented some sample data.

The data in this research were analyzed descriptively. In the analysis, the findings were presented in the types of error, the sample of sentences which contain errors, the revised version of the sample sentences, and the frequency of the occurrence.

After analyzing the data taken from 57 students, it can be found that there are lots of errors in using simple present tense in answering the structure 1 final examination. There were 426 errors that were made by the students with the classification 11 of omission, 412 of misinformation, 2 of misordering and 1 addition. The researcher has calculated the total of errors percentage of each type and here are the results:

Percentage of students' errors in using simple present tense:

A. Omission

$$P = \frac{11}{426} \times 100 \% = 2,58\%$$

B. Misformation

$$P = \frac{412}{426} \times 100 \% = 96,71\%$$

C. Misordering

$$P = \frac{2}{426} \times 100 \% = 0,47\%$$

D. Addition

$$P = \frac{1}{426} \times 100 \% = 0,23\%$$

Table 3. Frequency of students' error in using simple present tense

No	Types of Error	Frequency of Error	Percentage
1.	Omission	11	2.58%
2.	Misformation	412	96.71%

3.	Misordering	2	0.47%
4.	Addition	1	0.23%

Based on the table of students' error in using simple present tense, it can be said that:

- a. Total error of omission is 11 on the percentage 2.58%
- b. Total error of misformation is 412 on the percentage 96.71%
- c. Total error of misordering is 2 on the percentage 0.47%
- d. Total error of addition is 1 on the percentage 0.23%

### Discussion

#### Types of Errors

Surface strategy taxonomy from Dulay et al. (1982) is used to analyze the errors of this study. Surface strategy taxonomy analyzes the change of the surface structures of the sentences. This taxonomy analyzes the errors in which learners may omit, add, misform, or even misorder components of the sentence. Based on the surface taxonomy strategy, errors are classified into omission error, addition error, misformation, and misordering.

#### Omission Errors

Omission error is one kind of errors that is made by the second semester students of English Department of Teacher Training and Education of Muhammadiyah Pringsewu Lampung. Omission errors are identified by the absence of an item or morpheme that must appear in a well-formed utterance (Dulay et al., 1982). This error can happen when the learners miss some required components from their sentences. The learners omit components which is necessary for the sentences which is considered grammatically correct.

The errors of omission found in this study were the omission of *auxiliary verbs* (*be*), omission of verb inflection (marker *-s/-es*), and other omission errors.

1. Omission of auxiliary verbs (*to be and to do*)

Omission of auxiliary verbs is one kind of omission error made by the students as the English language learners. This kind of error is that the students did not add some items of the sentences that should appear in the sentences. The following sentences are the examples of the omission error:

- a. The students happy
- b. The man hungry
- c. I not go to *Pringsewu*

The sentence “the students happy” for part (a) is the example of the sentence made by the students that is not grammatically correct because the students missed to add or put the auxiliary verb “are” before adjective “happy”.

The same incorrect composition is in the sentence part (b) “the man hungry”. This sentence is grammatically incorrect because the students did not add or put the auxiliary verb “is” after the word “man” as the subject and before the word “hungry” as the adjective.

The students also made an error in composing sentence part (c) “I not go to Pringsewu”. This error is indicated with the absence of auxiliary verb “do” before the word “not” in negative sentence.

As it is known that the simple present tense which is from nominal form in English language, has to be added with the *tobe (am, are, is)* after the subject and before an adjective, a noun and an adverb as the complement to make the sentence grammatically correct.

Thus, the revised sentences should be:

- a. The students are happy
  - b. The man is hungry
  - c. I do not go to *Pringsewu*
2. Omission of verb inflection (marker–s/-es)

For the omission error, the students omit verb inflection (marker–s/-es) errors. The students do not add “s/es” at the final of the verb in verbal simple present tense. The following sentences are the examples:

- a. The lecturer *teach* the students knowledge.
- b. My father *do* not give money every day.
- c. The student *knock* at the door.

The sentence “the lecturer teach the students knowledge” in example part (a) is incorrect sentence. The students did not insert “es” at the final of the verb “teach”. The students have to insert or add “es” not only “s” because the subject is from the third person singular “the lecturer” and the final letter of the verb is “ch”.

The error also happens in the sentence part (b) “My father *do* not give money every day”. From this sentence, it is clear that the students do not add or insert “es” at the final of auxiliary verb “do”. As it is known that if the subject is from specific subject, the singular third person, noun or thing, the verb should be inserted with “s/es”. For the sentence “My father *do* not give money every day”, the subject is the word “my mother” and the speaker told the singular third person, so the auxiliary verb “do” has to be added with “es” at the final of the auxiliary verb “do”. Why is the auxiliary verb “do” added with “es” and not only “s”? Because the auxiliary verb “do” ends with “o” letter.

For the third sentence “the student *knock* at the door” is incorrect because the students missed to add “s” after the verb “knock”. The students have to add only

“s” because the verb “knock” ends in consonant “k”. This is a verbal sentence and the subject is the singular third person “the student”. From this sentence, it is clear that the speaker or the writer told someone that there is “the student knock at the door”. The word “student” is singular because there is no plural indicator, like “s” or “es” to show more than one. Based on the discussion above, the correct sentences should be:

- a. The lecturer teaches the students knowledge.
- b. My father does not give money every day.
- c. The student knocks at the door.

#### Addition Error

Next type of error made by the students in making simple present tense composition or sentences is addition error. Addition error can be said as the opposite of omissions error type. Addition error is characterized by the presence of an item which is unnecessary or mostly not appear in well-formed sentences. It means that the speakers or the writers add some words that should not appear in the sentences they made.

There are three types of this kind of error. They are double marking, regularization, and simple addition. There was only one type of addition errors that was made by the students, namely, addition of double marking. For addition error type, the students got 0.23 percentage of all error types.

#### Addition of Double Marking

Double marking is errors in which the learners fail to delete certain required components and give more than one marking in constructing sentences. The example of this kind of errors is:

You are do not eat some bread with me.

The sentence “You are do not eat some bread with me” is grammatically incorrect. This sentence is categorized into negative sentence by the presence of the word “not”. Simple present tense formula said that the negative simple present tense form should be added with the auxiliary verb “do/does” and followed with the word “not”. The auxiliary verb “do” is for subjects “I”, “we”, “you”, “they” and the other plural nouns and the auxiliary verb “does” is for the subject pronouns “he”, “she”, “it” or the person, noun and thing that refer to one of the pronouns. Actually, the students have added the auxiliary verb “do” and “not” for the subject “you” as the indicator of the negative sentence type but this sentence is still incorrect. The incorrectness of this sentence is that the students have added two double auxiliary verbs for one subject in one simple sentence, they are auxiliary verbs “are” and “do” after subject “you”. Based on the simple present tense formula, there is no double auxiliary verb the auxiliary verb in one sentence. This type of the sentence is verbal sentence, so the auxiliary verb “are” should be omitted or deleted from the sentence because this is verbal simple present tense type and the subject of the sentence is “you”. Thus, the revised sentence should be: You do not eat some bread with me.

#### Misformation Errors

Misformation error is the type of error that is marked or characterized by the use of wrong morpheme or structure. There are three types of these errors, which are regularization, archy form, and alternating form. The error of misformation found in this study was only misformation of archy-forms. The following are the examples of misformation error:

- a. My mother *teachs* mathematics at elementary school.
- b. Refti Agustina Putrigos to the library.
- c. The student *brushs* tooth every morning.

The sentence “My mother *teachs* mathematics at elementary school” is regarded as grammatically incorrect. Seen from the construction, the students have tried to use the correct “s” at the final of the verb “teach”. Apparently, the students have understood that for the singular third person subject in simple present tense, the verb as the predicate should be added with “s” but the students were still not familiar to use “s”. They only over generalized that every singular third person, noun or thing subject, the final verb as the predicate should be added by “s”. Based on the form of verb, if the verbs end with consonants + y: change “y” to “i” and add “-es” and when verbs end in “s, z, -ch, sh, or x”: add -es to infinitive. The final verb of the sentence “My mother *teachs* mathematics at elementary school” is “ch”, so the final verb should be added with “es” and the sentence becomes “My mother *teaches* mathematics at elementary school”.

For the sentence part (b) “Refti Agustina Putri *gos* to the library” is also incorrect. The students are still unfamiliar with the use of “s” and “es”. The verb ends in vowel “o” should be added with “es” for the singular third person, noun or thing and the sentence becomes “Refti Agustina Putri goes to the library”.

The sentence part (b) “The student *brushs* tooth every morning” is incorrect because the students did not the appropriate inflection “s” and “es” at the final of the verb “brush”. This verb ends with consonants “sh”, the verb should not be added with only “s” but it has to be inserted or added with “es” at the end or the final of verb “brush”. The correct sentence, then, The student *brushes* tooth every morning.

These three samples of the sentences show that the students made errors in adding the final indicator of the simple present tense. The students would add the verb with the singular third person or noun but they were incorrect in using “s” or “es”. They have to remember that not all of the final verb of the simple present tense indicator with the singular third person or noun are added by “s” but some of the



verbs ended with “es” as well. The verb ended in “sh, ch, ss, o should be added or inserted with “es”. The three correct sentences for the three incorrect sentences above should be:

- a. My mother teaches mathematics at elementary school.
- b. Refti Agustina Putri goes to the library.
- c. The student brushes tooth every morning.

#### Misordering Error

The next type of error is misordering error. This kind of errors is characterized by the incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance. This error has the percentage of 0.47 % from all types of errors. The example of these errors are:

- a. You *do* enter the class?
- b. I not do open the door.

The students made error in arranging the order of the correct sentences. Example of sentence part (a) “You do enter the class?” is incorrect construction because the students did not use the formula of how to make a question form correctly. The simple present tense formula question is started by the auxiliary verb both in verbal and nominal sentences then followed by the subject. The sentence “You do enter the class?” is verbal sentence, so the auxiliary verb is “do”. To make this sentence correct, it should be put at the first of the question and followed by the subject. The position of the auxiliary verb is at the first of the question. The correct sentence should be “Do you enter the class?”

The sentence part (b) “I not do open the door.” is also incorrect. Being seen from the sentence component, this sentence has complete elements of the sentence. It comprises subject and the auxiliary verb “do” to show the negative form of verbal

simple present tense but the inversion of the position of the auxiliary verb “do” and the word “not” makes the construction incorrect. The position of auxiliary verb “do” has to be put after subject and before the word “not”, so the sentence is “I do not open the class”.

The correct sentences should be:

- a. Do you enter the class?
- b. I do not open the door.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings of the analysis, it was found that the students made lots of errors in using simple present tense. The proportions are as follows:

- a. The types of errors that are faced by the students in using simple present tense are as follows: omission error, misinformation error, misordering error, and addition error.
- b. The percentages of errors for each types are: omission error 2.58%, misinformation error 96.71%, misordering error 0.47%, and addition error 0.23%.
- c. The most error made by the second semester students is misinformation error with 96.71%.

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