An Error Analysis on the Use of Past Tense in Recount Text by 6th Grade Elementary Students

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Abstract:

Writing is a difficult skill in English learning. It is not easy to have a good skill in writing because writing is an activity that needs more concentration and practice. In addition, students must know the English grammar rule in writing a text. The difficulties in writing can cause the students to make errors in their writing. When the students have limited knowledge about grammar and vocabulary, they will make errors in making sentences. The structure of the sentences will be inappropriate according to the structure rules and the meaning will be not clear. The errors can occur in the students' writing not only in grammar and vocabulary but also in expressing their ideas in English. This research aimed to find out typical errors on 6th grade elementary school students in writing recount text. However, researchers took primary data to obtain the result. There were 65 students writing recount text for this research. Qualitative approach was used for this research. The result stated that most students made errors on grammar aspects (noun, verb, determinant/article, preposition) with a percentage of 55,03%. Next, students made errors on punctuation which is 27,96%. Lastly, students made an error on spelling only 17,0%. Thus, error analysis is beneficial to evaluate students' writing skill through their errors.

Keywords: Error Analysis, Past Tense, Recount Text, Elementary Students

INTRODUCTION

As a communication tool, language is an essential aspect applied by humans to convey messages, opinions, and information. English is one of the languages that is spread all over the country, both developing and developed countries, so that this language is often

used as the language of communication between countries. In Indonesia, English is only considered as a foreign language. Thus, learning a foreign language for Indonesians is needed to be able to compete with countries that use English, for English is able to provide more access to knowledge, Information, and technology. Furthermore, one of the influences of English can also be seen in the educational aspect. English education for students is able to have a major effect on the development of how students can communicate and spread their ideas as sources of information, especially through writing.

Writing is one of the skills contained in English besides listening, reading and speaking or better known as the four English skills. Moreover, these skills are divided into two categories based on the usage, namely receptive and productive skills. Speaking and writing are better known as productive skills, and receptive skill is a term used to describe listening and reading (Akhter, 2020). Listening and reading are referred to as receptive skills because those are intended to obtain and collect information. However, speaking and writing skills aims to enable language users to convey information. Further, writing is also usually considered as one of the skills used for indirect communication because ideas must be written according to the rules of writing.

Writing is a process to create a meaning through a script. It shows composition instructions, such as generating and refining an idea (Zamel, 1982). Writing is an essential thing that can support students' success. By writing, people can communicate, share ideas, persuade, record experiences, and entertain others. Achieving effect in writing is important, and it is expected that the reader can understand the writing clearly (Graham, 2019). However, writing is a skill that need idea, imagination, and critical thinking (Simanjuntak, 2021). The written form is a media for people to express what they feel so that the output of the writing is that other people are able to understand the context the author wants to convey.

Writing activities need to be carried out among students since elementary school level so that students can produce good written work and accustomed to expressing something in written form. However, writing is an essential skill that is beneficial for students' future lives (Moses, 2019). Children are ready to acquire writing skills from an early age. Writing skills can be raised if it is trained from an early age. Students who can complete the writing exercises at the initial stage have a good performance in writing English afterwards (Hwang, 2014). In addition, through writing exercises, students can develop their analytical abilities in their language proficiency in English, including grammar and vocabulary (Jayanti, 2019). It can be concluded that writing is a useful skill that should be taught earlier at the elementary level. If students are accustomed to writing in English, then they will be trained to write.

In contrast, primary school students have lack in writing. From Bangladesh case by Rahman (2019), one of the difficulties in writing is due to the limitation of vocabulary because words have many meanings, different syntax, variations of inflectional endings, lack of concentration, and inappropriate class activities. In addition, students have faced many challenges in writing, such as using correct and appropriate grammar, combining ideas and thoughts in the form of sentences, expressing messages clearly. On Bai (2014), pupils are

struggle in writing because of a lack of knowledge of writing strategies, and students have difficulty generating ideas, do little or no prewriting comprehension, and revise little. Furthermore, with the difficulties that students feel they will have lack vocabulary, difficulty in expressing messages, and lack of knowledge about grammar. These things will cause errors in their writing, especially in writing recount text.

Recount text is a type of writing that is categorized as information that describes an event that has occurred. The purpose of writing recount text is to describe and inform a past event in writing form (Andansari, 2019). Thus, recount text functions as a medium of information regarding an activity or incident that occurred for the purpose of entertaining the reader. In the context of Indonesian students, they experience some difficulties in writing recount texts, such as differences in grammatical aspects, content aspects, organizational aspects, text structure, and so on. (Husna, 2019). In addition, English grammar differs from Indonesian language grammar, which can cause problems when writing in English. To write well, students must have a solid understanding of grammar. As a result, a lack of vocabulary can cause students to struggle with writing and make mistakes.

Writing difficulties can cause students to make mistakes in their writing. When students have lack knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, they will make mistakes when constructing sentences. The sentence structure will be poor, and the meaning will be unclear. Errors in students' writing can occur not only in grammar and vocabulary but also in expressing their ideas in English. According to Davies (2007) an error is a nontrivial deviation from the target language in second language teaching context. However, errors can occur in writing due to errors in the use of phrases, speech acts, or grammatical elements in such a way that incomplete learning appears imperfect and significant. For example, students who feel confused about using tenses in writing sentences, so the students created errors (Fitria, 2018). To overcome this error, teachers can use error analysis.

Error analysis has an important role to explore mistakes made by students in writing so that students will not make the same or repeated mistakes. It can be used to evaluate student errors. Mistakes are natural for students in learning a second language (Pardosi, 2019). Moreover, error analysis is the model that seems the most promising for research focusing on teaching writing. In this error analysis, teachers can analyse errors in discourse production to study second language learning, error theory, or perspectives on errors that occur (Bartholomae, 1980). Therefore, doing error analysis is one of the best ways to describe and explain the mistakes made by L2 learners, especially in the context of learning writing. However, this analysis can reveal the sources of student errors and why they occur. With this in mind, emphasis, and good instruction can be carried out in the future (Sompong, 2014).

After knowing that, the students made mistakes in their writing. The teacher should not allow the errors to reoccur. The teacher should investigate the types of errors made by students as well as the sources of errors that caused the errors in their writing. Error analysis can be the research that can evaluate students' writing activities. Therefore, the purpose of

this research is to explore errors that occur in sixth grade students in writing recount text using the simple past tense.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are some researches explored about an error analysis, especially in recount text context. Andansari (2020) conducted a research about error analysis of recount text for millennial level (senior high school students). Her research result stated that there were four errors found: omissions, additions, substitutions, and permutations. In addition, Asni (2018) also conducted research in error analysis of recount text for junior high school students. The result showed that students made all kinds of errors, which were omission, addition, selection, and misordering. However, there were some researchers conducted about error analysis for recount text. In contrast, it was only focus on junior-senior high school. Thus, this research was focus on error analysis for recount text in 6th grade students or in primary level students.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used qualitative descriptive which aim to be able to explain the data obtained in the form of numerical data which is a discovery that takes the form of errors in students' writing. Qualitative descriptive is a research that involve naturalistic data, where this approach can study language learning and teaching naturally without intervention or manipulation of variables (Nassaji, 2015). Thus, qualitative descriptive was used to see presentation and frequency errors made by elementary school students in writing recount texts using the simple past. The data used was primary data, where 65 recount texts written by grade 6th students were used. By analyzing the data, the researchers can see the errors that occur so that they can be classified based on the linguistic aspects. In this research, there are two main instruments which are applied to reach the accurate results regarding the errors that students made. The researchers are determined as the first instrument where the researchers act for conducting the data collection, data analysis, and data report. Creswell and Creswell (2018) said that the researcher can be the first instrument which has a purpose to collect the data and to provide inspection of the subject (p. 181). On the other hand, students' work that is recount text had been chosen as the second instrument to be researched in deep.

In analyzing the errors, the researchers referred to Ellis' (1994) steps. Fundamentally, the researchers had to find errors in the text written by the students, then the researcher classified the errors that have been made by the students. In addition, the researcher explained the students' mistakes. Lastly, the researcher tabulated the sources of error. This was to find out what mistakes students make the most by its percentage. In this study, the researchers classified errors in three linguistics aspects based on Fitria (2020), which were grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

FINDINGS

Table 1. Students' Error Frequency

Linguistics aspect	Error Frequency	Total %
Grammar	246	55,03%
Determiner/Article	17	6,91%
Verb	178	72,35%
Preposition	28	11,38%
Noun	23	9,34%
Spelling	76	17,0%
Punctuation	125	27,96%
Total	447	

Table 1 showed the result of students' error frequency statistically. It can be stated that most common error made by elementary school students in grade 6th level is grammar aspect. According to Ameliani, (2019), Grammar is a pattern or sentence structure in the use of language. This can help learners to understand the meaning of sentences. Grammar aspects include verbs, prepositions. determinants/articles, and nouns. However, the frequency of grammatical errors was 246 (55.03%). The most frequent mistakes in the grammatical aspect are in verbs (72.35%). Verb is a word that expresses someone's action, condition, and experience. Further, some mistakes in the verbs made by students;

Verb's Error 1
Wrong: Two days ago, I have birthday party
Correct: Two days ago, I had birthday party

Verb's Error 2
Wrong: My family and I make hot drank
Correct: My family and I made hot drink

Verb's Error 3
Wrong: My little sister wanted to went to the cinema
Correct: My little sister wanted to go to the cinema

Verb's Error 4
Wrong: Yesterday, I am going to my grandmother's house
Correct: Yesterday, I went to my grandmother's house

Verb's Error 5
Wrong: I started to swam
Correct: I started to swim

Based on the results above, students still feel confused about using the simple past to write recount text. However, students must use simple past (verb two) in telling their experiences in the past. In addition, past usually has time expression such as yesterday, last night, three days ago, etc. Thus, simple past has regular and irregular verb (Azar, 2003). From

this result, students still use the simple present in the context of events that have already occurred, as in Error 1 and Error 2. In addition, students use the simple future, not the simple past as in Error 4. Thus, students also have errors in using the infinitive + past (see Error 3 and Error 5), where after the "to" word there is no need to change the verb into the past form.

In addition to making mistakes on verbs, students also made mistakes on prepositions. 11.38% of students made mistakes on prepositions. These are the example of errors made by students:

Preposition's Error 1
Wrong: 07.20, I went to the swimming pool
Correct: At 07.20, I went to the swimming pool

Preposition's Error 2
Wrong: I went home on my motorbike
Correct: I went home by my motorbike

Preposition's Error 3
Wrong: I returned to home
Correct: I returned home

Preposition's Error 4
Wrong: I continued playing and my friend
Correct: I continued playing with my friend

Preposition's Error 5
Wrong: We took a rest for ate and drank
Correct: We took a rest to eat and drink

Students make errors on various of prepositions, as in Error 1, students do not use the preposition "at" for the hour marker. On Error 2, the student made an error in using the inappropriate preposition, where the student should have used by instead of on. Students also made an error on the preposition "to" on Error 3 and 5. In addition, students did error on the preposition "with".

Next, 9,34% students got errors on noun. These are the several examples of error on noun that students did:

Noun's Error 1
Wrong: Then, we went to gramedia
Correct: Then, we went to the Gramedia

Noun's Error 2
Wrong: I went on vacation to bukit tinggi

Correct: I went on vacation to Bukit Tinggi

Noun's Error 3
Wrong: We went to the main square of yogyakarta
Correct: We went to the main square of Yogyakarta

Noun's Error 4
Wrong: The Japanese cave has 3 mains doors
Correct: The Japanese cave has three main doors

Noun's Error 5
Wrong: I went to dufan with my brother and mother
Correct: I went to Dufan with my brother and mother

In Errors 1, 2, 3, and 5 students do not use capital letters for nouns such as Bukit Tinggi, Dufan, Gramedia, and Yogyakarta. Furthermore, students still make errors in writing plural nouns in Error 4.

Lastly, the determiner/article is a grammar aspect with the lowest percentage of errors made by students. Some examples of errors made:

Det/Art's Error 1
Wrong: I went to Japanese cave
Correct: I went to the Japanese cave

Det/Art's Error 2
Wrong: I took clothe I like
Correct: I took the clothe I like

Det/Art's Error 3
Wrong: The six of returned to class and continued lessons
Correct: The six of returned to the class and continued the lessons

Det/Art's Error 4
Wrong: My mother, my brother, and I bought entrance tickets
Correct: My mother, my brother, and I bought the entrance tickets

Det/Art's Error 5
Wrong: They wanted to watch Pencak Silat competition
Correct: They wanted to watch a Pencak Silat competition

Determiner/article is a word used before a noun, to make it clear what the noun is referring to. In Errors 1, 2, 3, and 4, the use of "the" should be used to refer to nouns that are

specific and have been resolved before. Whereas in Error 5 added "a" because it was not mentioned before.

The next linguistic aspect is punctuation. Punctuation marks are symbols or special signs to make writing easy to understand. However, punctuation marks consist of periods, commas, colons, question marks, brackets, exclamation points, apostrophes, quotation marks, and ellipsis. However, these are the examples of a punctuation error made by a student:

<div align="center">

Punctuation's Error 1:
Wrong: She wanted to buy a red school bag for frind's
Correct: She wanted to buy a red school bag for Frind

Punctuation's Error 2:
Wrong: After that I went home
Correct: After that, I went home

Punctuation's Error 3:
Wrong: At the top I burned sausages and many more
Correct; At the top, I burned sausages and many more

Punctuation's Error 4
Wrong: On Sunday I went to the zoo with my family
Correct: On Sunday, I went to the zoo with my family

Punctuation's Error 5
Wrong: After we went around we took a rest
Correct: After we went around, we took a rest

</div>

From the result above, students mostly did not use coma "," on their writing (Error 2,3,4, and 5). However, commas are essential in writing so that the writing becomes clearer. In addition, students also had errors in using apostrophes in Error 1, where the use of the apostrophe was inappropriate because it did not state ownership.

The last linguistic aspect is spelling. This aspect has a percentage of 17.0% on students' writing errors. Spelling is how students write words correctly without any typos, so the reader can understand the meaning of the student's writing. The following is an example of an error made by a student:

<div align="center">

Spelling's Error 1
Wrong: I wanted chicken kari
Correct: I wanted chicken curry

</div>

Spelling's Error 2
Wrong: We were geting redy to go home
Correct: We were getting ready to go home

Spelling's Error 3
Wrong: I was verry happy
Correct: I was very happy

Spelling's Error 4
Wrong: I was not really angry either
Correct: I was not really hungry either

Spelling's Error 5
Wrong: Frist, we watched Avatar 2
Correct: First, we watched Avatar 2

Some errors in spelling occur because of differences in pronunciation and writing. Example in Error 2, students might hear "redy" instead of "ready". It is the same as Error 1, 3, and 4. In addition, there was also an error in writing ordinal numbers such as in Error 5, which must be first.

Table 2. Error Frequency Rank

No.	Linguistics Aspect	Total %
1.	Grammar	55,03%
2.	Punctuation	27,96%
3.	Spelling	17,0%

Table 2 showed the most errors made by students. Firstly, grammar aspect has 55.03%. Next is punctuation (27.96%). Lastly, spelling has 17.0%. It can be concluded that the grammar aspect is the error most often made by students (55.03%). This study result is related to Fitria (2020) which stated that grammatical aspects were the aspects of the most errors made by students. The most grammatical aspects made by students on Fitria's study is determiner/article, which is the contrast from this study. In the primary level context, most errors made by students are verb aspects, where they still have errors in choosing verbs in recount text. For example, a sentence with an adverb of time "yesterday", but the verb used was future tense (be going to).

However, with this error analysis research, it can be seen that students still make mistakes in verbs when writing recount texts. This can be an evaluation for English teachers, especially elementary school teachers to find new ways of teaching verbs for the simple past. Thus, students know more about the use of simple past for recount text or writing for the past context.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore errors made by students at the 6th grade of primary level especially in writing recount text by using simple past. The results of this study stated that the most errors made by students were in the grammar aspect (55.03%), where they still had difficulties in using the simple past verb to tell their past experiences. There are still students who use future tense (will/be going to), simple present tense (verb one), and errors in using to infinitive. Next, the error made by students is punctuation (27.96%). This is because some students are not aware of the use of punctuation marks such as comma and full stop. In addition, students also make errors in using apostrophes. The last aspect error is spelling (17.0%). Students make writing mistakes on words that confuse them, such as "very" becomes "verry" and "ready" becomes "redy". However, this error analysis study is expected to provide an evaluatim of students' learning, so that errors do not occur in their writing in the future.

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