VERB FORMATION ERRORS IN STRUCTURING SIMPLE PAST SENTENCES

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Abstract:
This study is an investigation of college students' English tense knowledge, according to their work of writing simple past sentences. The students' written work was analyzed to find the most frequent errors made by students when they were writing their activities done in the day before. The errors were then identified in the sentences on their writing. The study used descriptive qualitative method, and was conducted through (a) identifying the most frequent errors in student's simple past sentences, (b) classifying the errors into their categories, and (c) analyzing what causes the errors to be made. The result shows that the most frequent errors made by college students in writing simple past sentences are errors of verb formation. The verb formation errors are classified into three forms of error: regularizations, archi-forms and alternating forms. The dominant errors found in this research are archi-form (88%) and alternating form (12%). The errors are most likely caused by the students' confusion in selecting a class member of verb as there are two choices to use, the students' growth of grammar knowledge that make them have bigger or more selection of verb use and the students' comprehension failure of mastering tense.

Keyword:
simple past; error; misformation

INTRODUCTION

To be able to write English accurately, you need to understand English grammar. However, mastering grammar is not easy, many students have trouble learning it and consider grammar as the most difficult element to learn. Grammar often makes students fear using English either in written or in spoken communication. One of grammar aspects is tense, which has essential role in writing. According to researchers' experience, a lot of students still make errors in tense usage.

Making errors in learning process is unavoidable but acceptable, yet the errors need investigating and correcting. The errors that are found in students' written work on simple past sentences are in verb formation. As known that simple past verb has one verb with two forms: regular and irregular verbs, besides simple past sentences can be formed with was or were if there no action. These rules are not easy for English as second language learners.

These particular errors are common in students' writing and they are made repeatedly. Therefore, researchers considered that the phenomenon deserved researching. In this study researchers would like to identify, classify and describe the errors of using verb in simple past sentences and intend to point out the most frequent mistakes, in order that they can focus on the method of teaching. As mentioned by James (1998:12) that errors are significant in three aspects: errors tell the teachers what needs to be taught; errors tell the researchers how learning proceeds; errors are a means whereby learners test their hypothesis about the L2.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Simple Past
English has four major tenses. The tenses are present, past, perfect and future. The four tenses are ellaborated into sixteen tenses. Simple past tense is one of the elaborated tense. Simple past tense is functioned to tell actions or situations that happened in specific time in the past and finished. As described by Azar (1989: 24) that simple past tense indicates that an activity or situation began and ended at particular time in the past.

Simple past tense has two forms of sentences which are:
a) Sentences with no verb

In this sentences, the verbs used are auxiliary verbs like was and were. *Was* or *were* links subject and its description called complement, such as adjective, noun or adverb.

Affirmative:

I You He She It	was	busy. his friend. at home
We You They	were	

Negative:

I You He She It	was not (wasn't)	busy. his friend. at home
We You They	were not (weren't)	

Interrogative:

Was	I you he she it	busy? his friend? at home?
Were	we you they	

b) Sentences with verb

In the second sentence form, the verbs used are main verb. The verbs tell what the subject does.

The main verbs used in simple past are:
1) Regular verbs are the verbs ended with endings *–d* or *–ed*

Examples: work → worked
        like → liked
        study → studied
        stop →stopped
2) Irregular verbs are the verbs with different spelling from the base forms and some verbs with no change in base forms.

Examples: go →went
        eat →ate
        make →made
        cut →cut
        put→put

Affirmative:

I You We They He She It	played. started. watched. had. saw. did. went.

Negative:

I You We They He She It	did not (didn't)	play. start. watch. have. see. do. go.

Interrogative:

Did	I You We They He She It	play? start? watch? have? see? do? go?

Error
In the process of leaning, making errors is acceptable, but it needs correcting. For most ESL learners, errors happens as they fail to understand the knowledge of the tense or they do overgeneralization of the rules. According to Corder, (1974: 259) as cited in Jabeen (2015:53) that errors are the result of incomplete learning and linguistic incompetency of the learners and errors cannot be self-corrected. Meanwhile Dulay, Burt and Kreshen (1982:138) stated that errors are flawed side of learner speech and writing. They are those parts of conversation or composition that deviate from some selected norm of mature language competence.

Dulay, et al also described that like L1 learners' errors, most of the errors L2 learners make indicate they are gardually building an L2 rule system. Among the most common errors are:
a) Ommiting gramatical morpheme

There is an element that is absence, but it does not contribute a lot to the meaning of sentences, as in *she let me in,* it should be *She lets me in.*

b) Double marking

Only one marker is needed (e.g. past tense), but leaners use two markers, as in *They didn't arrived on time*, it should be *They didn't arrive on time.*

c) Regularizing rule

Following general rules, as in *childs* for *children.*

d) Using archiforms

A form places another form, the word *his* places *him* and *he*, as in *I meet his last night. His talked with my sister*. It should be *I met him last night. He talked with my sister.*

e) Using two of more forms

In random alternation even though the language requires the use of each only under certain conditions, as in the random use of *he* and *she* regardless of the gender of the person of interest.

f) Misordering item

Wrong constructions that do not follow the word-order rules, as in *Where they are going?* it should be *Where are you going?* Or misplacing item, as in *They are all the time late.*

To categorize the errors based on observation and findings of study done, Dulay,et al. propose a surface strategy taxonomy of errors, which are as follow:

1) Ommisions

One element that must exist in a sentence, but it misses, for example: *Mary president new company*, it should be *Mary is the president of the new company.*

2) Additions

The use of one element that must be absent to form a sentence, for example: *He doesn't knows my name*, it should be *He doesn't know my name.*

3) Misformations

The wrong form of the morpheme or structure, for example: *The dog ated the chicken,* it should be *The dog ate the chicken.*

4) Misorderings

The incorrect placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes to form a sentence, for example: *What Daddy is doing?* It should be *What is Daddy doing?*

Misformation

Dulay, et al. (1982:158) mention that misformations are categorized by the incorrect form of the morpheme or structure. In misformation, the learners obtain something although it is wrong. For example: The dog eated the chicken. A past tense member was supplied by the learners; it was just the wrong one.

Dulay, at al. also classify misformation into three types:

1. Regularization

A regular form is used in place of an irregular form, as in *drinked* for *drank.*

2. Archi-forms

The incorrect class of word is used to represent others, as in *What is you eat?* It should be *What do you eat?*

3. Alternating forms

When the learners develop their grammar knowledge, they have more free alternative word classes used, as in *She eaten bread this morning*, it should be *She ate bread this morning.*

METHODS

In this study, the descriptive qualitative method is used to analyze the data. According to Nopinawati (2021: 61) explains that descriptive qualitative is the study describing situations or phenomena designed to obtain information in the current state used to investigate the objects that exists naturally.

Research Questions

1) What are the most common errors made by the students in constructing simple past sentences?

2) What are the causes of mis-formation error made by the students in constructing simple past sentences?

Participants

Participants of this study were the students at the second semester of Institut Digital Ekonomi LPKIA Bandung. The numbers of participants are 30 students. The students were not majoring in English, but they were majoring in accounting.

Instruments

To obtain the data of verb formation errors from the participants, thirty students in the middle exam were assigned to write sentences in simple past tense, in which each students had to write five sentences with the given time signal as the clues. To analyze the results, library literatures and former researchers' articles were read.

Data analysis

Step 1: All the results were identified to find the verb formation errors.

Step 2: After identifying, the data were classified into its categories of verb formation errors.

Step 3: Labelling the most frequent verb formation error in percentage.

Step 4: analyzing the data, and then describing them.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Distribution of Errors

Verb Formation Error		
Verb Misformation	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Regularizations	0	0%
Archi-Forms	25	88%
Alternating Forms	12	12%

1. Archi-Forms
    (1) My shoes was black when I was in high school.
    (2) I didn't at home yesterday
    (3) I am so happy in my last birthday.
    (4) My uncle don't clean his car yesterday
    (5) I like chocolate when I was a child.
    (6) My mother wasn't cook yesterday.
    (7) I didn't invited Hana to the party yesterday.

Data (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (7) show that the errors occur in the verbs. The selection of verb classes used are incorrect, and they are labelled Archie-Forms. Data (1) the verb was should be were as plural subject shoes uses were, so the correct sentence is My shoes were black when I was in high school. Data (2) the auxiliary verb didn't should be wasn't as the subject doesn't do an action, there is a complement at home, so the correct sentence is I wasn't at home yesterday. Data (3) the auxiliary verb am should be was as the time signal used indicates past time my last birthday, so the correct sentence is I was so happy in my last birthday. Data (4) the auxiliary verb don't should be didn't as the negation of simple past uses did not, so the correct form of the sentence is My uncle didn't clean his car yesterday. Data (5) the verb like should be liked as it is past condition, so the correct sentence is I liked chocolate when I was a child. Data (6) the auxiliary verb wasn't should be didn't as the subject does an action cook, so the correct sentence is My mother didn't cook yesterday. Data (7) the verb invited should invite as after the auxiliary verb didn't the base form is used, so the correct sentence is I didn't invite Hana to the party yesterday.

2. Alternating Forms
    (1) I was played game last night.
    (2) My brother stolen my phone when I was a child.

Data (1) and (2) show that the errors occur on the verbs. The misusage of the verbs alternation is caused by the growth of participant grammar knowledge. Data (1) the verbs was played should be played; no was. The verb was played selected since after learning simple past tense in active voice participants learned simple past tense in passive voice with the form: was/were plus past participle, so the correct sentence is I played game last night. Data (2) the past participle stolen should be stole, it occurs as the participants learned present perfect tense after learning simple past tense, thus the correct sentence is My brother stole my phone when I was a child.

CONCLUSION

This study attempts to find out the most common errors done by the students in writing simple past sentences. After completing analysis, the most common errors made are in verb misformation with three types of error forms. The most frequent error forms made are archi-form (88%), and followed alternating form (12%). The errors occur due to the students' confusion in selecting a class member of verb as there are two choices to use, the students' growth of grammar knowledge that make them have bigger or more selection of verb use and the students' comprehension failure of mastering tense. Categorizing the errors may help lecturers choose the most appropriate technique to teach their students and have a view to do further research about error analysis.

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