STUDENTS' ERRORS IN USING THE SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE
AT POLYTECHNIC ATI PADANG

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ABSTRACT

The research aimed at analyzing the errors in using simple present tense at Logistics Management of Agro-Industry of Polytechnic ATI Padang. A qualitative method with descriptive approach was applied. The samples were 15% of 153 total students or 23 students. Data were collected through the writing test; namely, descriptive essay. The results show that many students commit errors in using the simple present tense. The errors are classified into four types: omission, addition, misinformation, and misordering. There are 107 errors with the highest number that is omission (61 errors or 57%). Misinformation is in second place with 29 errors (27,1%). The error of addition gains 11,2 % with 12 errors. The lowest error is misordering, which gains 4,7% with only five errors. In conclusion, the most dominant error made by the students is omission with 57% and misordering is the lowest one with 4,7%. Therefore, the lecturers are expected to improve the teaching strategies in teaching simple present tense to reduce the numbers of students' errors.

Keywords: error analysis, students` error, simple present tense

INTRODUCTION

As one of the international languages, English has very important roles. It is used as a tool of communication among people all over the world. It is also widely studied and becomes one of the important subjects taught at school. In Indonesia, English is considered as one of the foreign languages and becomes a compulsory subject which is learned by the students from junior high school level up to college level. The government realizes that English is very important to support the development of competencies of students in this globalization era. Polytechnic ATI Padang as a vocational college focusing on the industry also provides English subjects to their students. English subject is taught to the first-year students at Logistics Management of Agro-Industry (MLIA) department of Polytechnic ATI Padang and is given in the form of theory and practice.

The students have been studying English since junior high school level, and some have even studying it since kindergarten. Based on this fact, it is shown that students had studied English before they entered college. They have learned English for six years on average. The length of a person learning English does not guarantee he/she can use English correctly. Even though they have studied English for a long time, they still have difficulties with grammar.

The grammar that takes a significant role in English skills provides information beneficial to the learner's comprehension (Zuhriyah, 2017). However, most students, especially at Logistics Management of Agro-Industry (MLIA) department of Polytechnic ATI Padang, still have difficulties in understanding grammar. This will result in students experiencing difficulties in understanding other scientific books or references written in English. One of the difficulties experienced by the students is in understanding and using tenses. Tenses are one of many aspects discussed in English grammar. They play a crucial role in the English language. By understanding tenses, students can find out when the time of an event occurred, whether in the past (past tense), ongoing (continuous), or in the future (future tense).

Learning English is started with learning tenses. One of the basic tenses that are learned by the students is simple present tense. The simple present tense is used to express activities carried out routinely, state general facts, and state daily habits (Azar & Hagen, 2017). The examples of using the simple present tense in a sentence are "I get up at seven every morning" and "The world is round".

As a person who comes from a country that does not speak English, it is natural for a student to make mistakes in tenses, especially simple present tense. Based on the researcher's experience, there are many students who committed errors in using the simple present tense. This error is often found in their tasks. The example is "**I am go** to school". There is an error in that sentence; the correct one is "**I go** to school". Another example is "She

take a bus to school every day". The correct sentence is "She **takes** a bus to school every day". One of the reasons for this error is because in the Indonesian language the verb does not change even though the subject and adverb are changed, nevertheless, in English, the verb will change based on the changing of subject and adverb especially in the simple present tense. Thus, those examples are evidence that the students do not understand the rules and the usage of the simple present tense. English teachers must be aware of this and take steps to avoid these errors. One strategy that can be used is by analyzing errors in using the tenses made by students.

Several researchers have conducted research dealing with errors in using tenses. First, Abdullah (2013) has conducted research seeking errors committed by TESL college students in using the simple present tense and simple past tense in writing essays. The findings indicate that many students commit errors involving grammatical items, such as subject-verb agreement, tenses, parts of speech, and vocabularies. Types of errors committed by the students with regard to error analysis method are due to omission, addition, misinformation, and misordering. Next, Silalahi (2014) has conducted research seeking error on sentence writing assignments by first-year students in an IT university. It reveals that the errors found are classified into 24 types, and the top ten most common errors committed by the students are article, preposition, spelling, word choice, subject-verb agreement, auxiliary verb, plural form, verb form, capital letter, and meaningless sentences. Then, Kusumawardhani (2016) has studied the errors which have been made by the learners in their English narrative composition. The errors that have been found in the compositions are 30 items or 15% for errors of selection, 25 items or 12,5% for errors of ordering, 115 items or 57,5% for errors of omission, and 30 items or 15% for errors of addition. Finally, Kalee, Rasyid, and Muliastuti (2018) have conducted research seeking students' error on the use of letters in Indonesian papers written by Thai students. It reveals that the highest frequency of errors is capital letters with 48%.

Although there are several pieces of research, have been reported on the students' error in using tenses, but there is a few information about the error committed by vocational college students. Therefore, this research attempts to investigate the students' error in using simple present tense at Logistics Management of Agro-Industry (MLIA) department of Polytechnic ATI Padang. Besides that, this research is expected to provide information to English teachers about the types of errors made by the students so that it can be used to improve material and give feedback to the teachers in teaching simple present tense in the future.

In learning a language, it is common for students to make a mistake and error because learning a foreign language is considered different from learning the first language. Error making is a natural phenomenon in learning, and it has pedagogical implication (Robinson in Katiya, Mtonjeni, & Sefalane-Nkohla, 2015). Thus, the error is proof that the student is learning, and committing error is a common thing in the learning process.

The research of error is part of the investigation of the process of language learning. Error Analysis (EA) is an important topic in the second language (L2) acquisition and a hot research issue in recent years (Wedell & Liu in Cheng, 2015). There are some definitions of error analysis. First, James (2013) has described that error analysis is the process of determining the incidence, nature, causes, and consequences of unsuccessful language. Such analysis informs learners' errors, and thereby, notifies the competence learners attained (Sinha in Karim et al., 2018). In addition, Richards and Schmidt in Napitupulu (2017) have defined error analysis as a technique for identifying, classifying, systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms of a language in the production data of someone learning either a second or foreign language. This analysis is absolutely needed to be the basis for providing feedback to the students.

Al-Haysoni in Mohammed and AbdalHussein (2015) has argued that researchers in the area of EA are making advantages with their studies' outcome toward learners and teachers at the same time. It is because their studies provide vital information to the teachers on their students' error so they could correct these errors and improve their teaching methods by focusing on these areas of deficiency among students. Moreover, Hasyim in Al-Ghabra and Najim (2019) has explained the importance of error analysis to both learners and teachers. He has said that with error analysis, learners could know the difficulty that they face in grammar, and teachers could know if they are successful in teaching the material in question. In sum, error analysis is a process based on the analysis of learner's errors in their process of language learning.

According to James (2013), there are six steps in doing error analysis. The first is error detection. In error detection, no more than a reasonably firm yes/no decision is called for. It is using the sentence as the unit of analysis and asking the informants to report their intuition. The second is locating errors. Error location is not always so straightforward, and not all errors are easily localizable in this way. Some are diffused throughout the sentence or larger unit of text that contain global errors. The third is describing errors. The system used for a description of learner's errors must be one having two essential characteristics. At first, the system must be well-developed and highly elaborated because many errors made by beginners are remarkably complex. The fourth is error classification that not only entries on the grammatical categories but also a lexical category.

The fifth is error taxonomies or collections error taxonomies. Taxonomy must be organized according to certain constitutive criteria. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen in James (2013) have suggested the surface structure taxonomy. The surface strategy elements of a language are altered in specific and systematic ways. Among the common errors are omission errors, addition errors, misformation error, and misordering errors.

Omission errors are characterized by the absence of an item that must appear in a well-formed utterance. Language learners omit grammatical morphemes much more frequently than content words, e.g. "English **use** many countries". It must be "English **is used** by many countries". Then, addition errors are characterized by the presence of an item that must not appear in a well-formed utterance. Three types of addition errors are; (1) double marking is an error in which the learners fail to delete certain required components and give more than one marking in constructing sentences, for example, "**she didn't went** back". (2) Regularization, the example is "**eated** for ate", "**childs** for children". (3) Simple additions, the example is "the **fishes doesn't** live in the water". Next is misformation errors that are characterized by the use of the wrong form of the morphemes or structure. The types of errors are; regularization errors (the dog **eated** the chicken); archi-forms (I **see** her yesterday; **Her** dance with my brother); alternating forms (I **seen** her yesterday). While misordering errors are characterized by the incorrect

placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance. e.g., "I don't know what **is that**".

Moreover, the last step in doing error analysis is by counting errors. A further reason why errors are classified is to allow the researcher to count tokens of each type. Based on these explanations, the researcher follows the steps that are proposed by James (2013) in analyzing the errors; error detection, locating errors, describing errors, error classification, error taxonomies, and counting errors.

Tense is key in foreign language acquisition, which helps learners construct meaningful words or sentences (Tomakin, 2014). The English language has three kinds of tenses that are different from one another. The differences happen in the forms of the used verbs and the time of verbs action takes place. The simple present tense is one of several forms of the present tense in English. In a particular time, the simple present tense shows clearly that the English tense is different in time.

According to Murphy (2015), the simple present tense is used to talk about things in general, say something happens all the time, or something is true in general. In addition, the simple present tense says that something was true in the past, is true in the present, and will be true in the future (general statement of fact) (Azar & Hagen, 2017). It is also used to express habitual or everyday activity. The simple present is used with a non-action verb to indicate something that is happening right now.

The simple present tense is used to show some actions, such as habitual action, custom, fact, and future action. The sentence that shows actual habit can be seen from this example; "She works in the hotel." For the custom, it can be seen in this example; "Most Indonesian eats rendang on Ied Day." The next is the example sentence that shows the fact; "The earth revolves around the sun." If a time reference is included, the simple present can also be used to indicate future time. Future action can be seen in this example; "The movie starts in ten minutes." Based on these explanations, it can be concluded that the simple present tense is used to describe a routine activity, general facts, and future time.

METHODS

This research applies qualitative method with descriptive approach because its purpose is to describe things like the way and analyze the interrelationship of the data. It is conducted at Logistics Management of Agro-Industry (MLIA) department of Polytechnic ATI Padang in April 2019. Polytechnic ATI Padang is located at Jalan Bungo Pasang Tabing, Padang, West Sumatra. The participants of this research are the students of Logistics Management of Agro-Industry (MLIA) Department. Based on the syllabus, the students have learned the simple present tense in the first semester. There are four classes that consist of 153 students. These four classes are class MLIA 1A, MLIA 1B, MLIA 1C, and MLIA 1D. They are taught by the same lecturer.

In writing descriptive research, the sample of 10% is considered the minimum (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). The researcher takes 23 students from total students as the participant of the research (15% of the population= 23 students) because the researcher has limited ability in analyzing the data. Since the population is homogeneous, the sample is taken by using a simple random sampling technique where the students are selected randomly.

Data are collected from the Logistics Management of Agro-Industry (MLIA) department students based on their written essay. The instrument of the research is a descriptive writing test given to the students. Each student is required to write a descriptive essay with 300-350 words. In this test, the emphasis is given on the use of the simple present tense. The formula is:

$P = F/N \times 100\%$

P = Percentage

F = Frequency of error

N = Number of the sample which is   observed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of this research provide information about errors committed by the students at Logistics Management of Agro-Industry department of Polytechnic ATI Padang in using the simple present tense. The results are based on the students' writing test, which shows that 96% of the students or 22 students commit the error of omission. By comparison, 30% of the students or seven students commit the error of addition. Then, 19 students or up 82,6% committed the error of misinformation. Finally, 21,7% or five students commit the error of misordering. The summary of the result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Errors Committed in the Simple Present Tense

No	Types of errors		Numbers of students committed errors	%
1.	Omission		22	96%
2.	Addition	Double marking	4	17,4%
		Regularizations	1	4,3%
		Simple addition	2	8,7%
3.	Misinfor-mation	Regularizations	13	56,5%
		Archi-forms	4	17,4%
		Alternating forms	2	8,7%
4.	Misordering		5	21,7%

Based on Table 1, it is seen that most of the students or 22 out of 23 students commit the error of omission, and only five students commit the error of misordering. After analyzing the data, the total of errors committed by the students at Logistics Management of Agro-Industry Department is 107 errors. The recapitulation of the errors is presented in Table 2.

The result in Table 2 confirms that the most errors in using simple present tense committed by the students are omission with 61 errors, and the percentage is 57%. This finding confirms the result of Kusumawardhani (2016). In her research, Kusumawardhani (2016) has noticed that omission is the most dominant error. Next, the number of misinformation error is 29 errors, and the percentage is 27,1%. Then, the number of addition error is 12 errors, and the percentage is 11,2%. The smallest errors committed by the students are misordering with five errors, and the percentage is 4,7%. This finding is generally in agreements

with the results of Abdullah (2013). He confirms that misordering gains the lowest percentage. The frequency distribution of students' errors can be seen in Figure 1.

Table 2 The Recapitulation of Errors in Simple Present Tense

No	Types of errors		Numbers of students committed errors	%
1.	Omission		61	57%
2.	Addition	Double marking	9	8,4%
		Regularizations	1	0,9%
		Simple addition	2	1,9%
3.	Misinfor-mation	Regularizations	23	21,5%
		Archi-forms	4	3,7%
		Alternating forms	2	1,9%
4.	Misordering		5	4.7%
	Total		107	100%

Types of errors

- omission
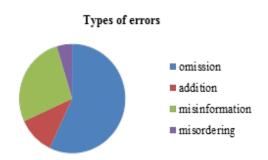- addition
- misinformation
- misordering

Figure 1 Frequency Distribution of Students' Errors

As it can be seen from Figure 1, the omission is the most dominant error, and the smallest amount error committed by the students at Logistics Management of Agro-Industry of Polytechnic ATI Padang is the error of misordering. Based on the error analysis, there are four types of errors in using simple present tense found in the students' essays; they are the omission, addition error, misinformation, misordering. The summary of errors committed by the students is shown in these examples.

For the omission errors, it can be seen in this example; "My village ___ in Matur." That sentence is an example of the omission of auxiliary verbs. It is the kind of omission error that is mostly made by the students. The subject in the sentence is in the singular form, and it is a nominal sentence; thus, the auxiliary verb 'is' has to be added next to the subject. The revised sentence should be: "My village is in Matur." Another example is "My mother work_ in the hospital." That sentence is the example of the omission of verbs inflection (marker -s/-es). It can be seen from the example that there is a lack of suffix -s after the main verb 'work'. Thus, the marker –s is added after the verb 'work'. Another reason is that the subject is the third person singular. The revised should be "My mother works in the hospital." Alternatively, others example is "She ____ not have a boyfriend." The subject in that sentence is the

third person singular, and it is in negative form; therefore, auxiliary verb 'does' is added after the subject 'she'. The revised should be "She **does** not have a boyfriend."

In addition error, there are double marking, regularizations, and simple addition. The example of double marking is "They **are gather** at Jalan Kampung Jawa Dalam. In this sentence, it has two verbs. The auxiliary verb 'are' is not needed in that sentence because the sentence 'gather' is the main verb. The revised should be: "They **gather** at Jalan Kampung Jawa Dalam." Another example is "**I'm** always **do** the best for my family." Like the error in the first example, the sentence also has double verbs. It has 'do' as the main verb. Therefore the auxiliary verb 'am' is not needed in that sentence. The revised should be: "**I** always **do** the best for my family." While the example of regularizations is "My parents have three **childs**." This sentence proves that the error happens when the students confuse about the use of regular and irregular forms. The plural of **child** is irregular form; children. The noun child does not have the addition –s form. The revised should be: "My parents have three **children**." Next is a simple addition, for example, "I have **a** friends. Her name is Lisa." The error in the sentence is the addition of the suffix –s. Since the object in the sentence is 'a friend', the ending '–s' is not needed after the object. The revised should be: "I have **a friend**. Her name is Lisa."

In misinformation errors, there are regularizations, archi-forms, and alternating forms. First is regularizations, for example: "She **don't** like rain." In this example, the subject in the sentence is the third person singular. It appears that the form of the auxiliary verb 'do' does not work with the subject 'she' in this sentence. The correct auxiliary verb for the subject is 'does' not 'do'. The revised should be: "She **doesn't** like rain." Another example is, "Everyone **have** a family." It appears that the verb 'have' is incorrectly used with the subject. For the subject everyone, the correct main verb is 'has' not 'have'. The revised should be: "Everyone **has** a family." For the example of the archi-forms can be seen in "My second and **three** brothers work at the bank." The word 'three' in the sentence is actually in the form of the ordinal number. Therefore, the correct one is 'third', not 'three'. The revised should be: "My second and **third** brother work at the bank."

The example for alternating forms is "…. *dan* I study at Polytechnic ATI Padang." The error in this sentence occurs because the student uses his native language in the sentence. The word '*dan*' means 'and' in English. The revised should be: "…. **and** I study at Polytechnic ATI Padang." Another example is, "My mother works **in the** home." The error that is found in this sentence is in the use of preposition 'in' and the article 'the'. They are not suitable to use in the sentence. The correct preposition for the word 'home' in that sentence is 'at'. The revised should be: "My mother works **at** home."

The last type of error is misordering, for example: "**Hobby Yovita's** is dancing." The error happens because the word 'hobby' is in the wrong position in the sentence. The revised should be: **Yovita's hobby** is dancing.

CONCLUSIONS

The result of this research reveals that the students at Logistics Management of Agro-Industry Department of Polytechnic ATI Padang make many errors in using the simple present tense. There are four types of errors in using simple present tense committed by the students. They are omission, addition, misinformation, and misordering. The

data shows that 22 out of 23 students or 96% of the students commit the error of omission. 30% of the students or seven students commit the error of addition. Then, 19 students or up 82,6% commit the error of misinformation. Meanwhile, only five students or 21,7% of the students make the error of misordering.

The findings of this research also show that the most dominant error made by the students is omission with 61 numbers of errors, and the percentage is 57%. The second place is the error of misinformation that gains 27,1%. The third place is the error of addition with a percentage of 11,2%. The error of misordering is the smallest amount of error committed by the students, with a percentage of 4,7%.

This research is significant because it provides information to English teachers about the types of errors made by the students so that they can be used to improve material and give feedback to the teachers in teaching simple present tense in the future. It tells to the lecturers something about the effectiveness of their teaching materials and their teaching techniques. In order to reduce the numbers of errors, the lecturers have to make the teaching-learning process more interesting and fun for the students. It can be done by using various strategies in teaching simple present tense. They also have to give more exercises for the students to reduce the errors.

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