



The Utilization of Past Tense in the Research Method Chapter of Theses by English Education Students

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Abstract. Error analysis constitutes a critical area in second and foreign language acquisition. This study aimed to categorize errors in the use of past tense within the research method chapters of English education students' theses, employing the surface strategy taxonomy to identify error types and their underlying causes. Conducted through a descriptive qualitative approach, the research focused on a sample of five theses from STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo in 2018, selected randomly to ensure representativeness. The findings revealed that errors were predominantly of the misformation type (63.3%), followed by addition (19.3%), omission (16.5%), and misordering (0.9%). Regarding error causes, overgeneralization emerged as the most prevalent factor (96.2%), indicating a tendency to apply grammatical rules overly broadly. Neglecting rule constraints and incomplete rule application were less common, each accounting for 0% and 2.5%, respectively, while errors stemming from misconceptions represented 1.3%. These outcomes underscore the importance of error analysis in gauging students' language proficiency, particularly in academic writing contexts like thesis chapters. To mitigate these errors, educators could emphasize targeted instruction on rule application and offer explicit feedback tailored to addressing overgeneralization tendencies among learners. Such insights not only enrich our understanding of language learning processes but also inform pedagogical strategies aimed at enhancing student competence in scholarly communication.

Keywords: analysis, error analysis, past tense, research method, theses

INTRODUCTION

Committing errors by students who are learning a new language is common (Fauziati, 2010). Language errors are inevitable in learning process including learning a second or a foreign language. Language errors are not only interpreted as deviations from the target language, but also as a source to investigating what goes on in the learners' mind. Analysis is needed as a tool to determine how the language learned, by which the learners learn the rules of the target language, second and foreign language learning. Error analysis provides a deep insight for understanding of the process of language learning (Jabeen, 2015; Widodo & Slamet, 2020). As a result, it helps to know the students' ability in understanding language learning. Generally, when students study English, they have to learn and master grammar. Grammar is also important for language learning (Mohamad et al., 2019; Slamet, 2019). Grammar often becomes the obstacles for the college students when they write a thesis. As a learner, the college students may realize that both their first language and second language bring different style of rules. Grammar is an explanation of how the forms of word can be changeable and united into sentences. Thus, the language learners to be needs to study the grammar (Al-Khresheh, 2016; Jain, 2015).

Furthermore, tense is important because people use it to signal when the activities happen. Past tense is one of the kinds of tense. Past tense indicates that an activity or situation began and ended at particular time in the past (Azar, 2006; Fatimah et al., 2020; Slamet & Sulistyaningsih, 2019). Past time is used when an action was completed without indicating any connecting with the present. In telling or describing something what happened in the past, it uses past tense. Thesis writing is an important part of any college education program. Before students of college can obtain any degree in a university, they should have a passing grade in a thesis writing class. A thesis is an end product that college students must write after attending several major courses. Therefore, conducting research is a logical consequence of the emergence of unanswered questions (Graue, 2016; Slamet & Witjaksono, 2019; Sulistyaningsih & Slamet, 2018). Research method chapter is important element in thesis writing. There are reasons why research method chapter is very crucial in thesis writing. First, the research method is included in a thesis as a partial fulfillment of the requirements to obtain an academic degree. Second, the research methods chapter describes actions to be taken to investigate a research problem and the rationale for the application of specific procedures or techniques used to identify, select, process, and analyze information applied to understanding the problem in research. Thereby, allowing the reader to critically evaluate a study's overall validity and reliability. Thus, research method chapter must be well – written and well – organized because it shows the writer's linguistics competence and writing skills. Third, research method chapter writing should be direct and precise and always written in the past tense.

The researcher is interested in investigating the research method chapter deeply on the writing. They just focus on the content only. The important of research method chapter describes a methods and provision of tools for carrying out the research thesis can be delivered well. Based on the explanation above, it is important to conduct research to analysis an error on the use of past tense in research method chapter of English education students' thesis. The researcher wants to know the students' ability in their thesis writing, especially in writing research method chapter. Anticipating error in learning language including on the use past tense error can be crucial because the error should be anticipated as early as possible. The errors mistakes are not rejected, but it will be an evaluation for consideration to not make the same mistakes in other occasions. The researcher identified several problems on the use of past tense in research method chapter of English education students' thesis. Referring to the several problems, the researcher formulated the statements of the problem to highlight the research were:

1. What are the errors found on the use of past tense in research method chapter of English education students' thesis in year 2018?
2. What are the causes of errors found on the use of past tense in research method chapter of English education students' thesis in year 2018?

Related to research questions, the scope of this research was study about the error analysis on the use of past tense in research method chapter of English education students' thesis. The subject of this research was limited to the students who took writing thesis at the English Education Study Program. The researcher chose analyze 5 students' thesis by the graduated students of STKIP PGRI SIDOARJO in year 2018.

METHOD

In this research, the researcher used descriptive qualitative method to find out errors in the research method chapter of English education students' thesis. Moreover, descriptive qualitative method is described phenomena in the form of words than number (Erdoğan, 2005). The descriptive qualitative method was used to identify one or a few variables that intended to use in this research work and proceed with data collection related to the variables. The subject of the study in this research was English Education students' thesis of STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo in year 2018. The researcher took 5 English education students thesis in year 2018 with the random sample for qualitative research. According to Arikunto (2014), for descriptive study the minimum of sample was 10% from the large population and for simple population 20% of sample was needed, whereas the number of samples for correlation were 5 samples.

The primary source of data of this research was the use of past tense in research method chapter of thesis bachelor degree. Besides, the second source of data was research which gave some theories about error analysis, and some data from the source books as references. In this case, the data was taken from direct observation and research in the object of the research or empiric data source to know students' writing consisting the errors focusing on the use of past tense based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy. Meanwhile, the data of this research was taken from English Education students' thesis of STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo in year 2018.

The researcher used several instruments which helped the researcher got the empirical data and drawn the conclusion or the result of this research easily. The instruments that the researcher used in this research are draft (document analysis) and table. According to Strauss and Corbin (2008), document analysis is a procedure to collect the data by reviewing and evaluating the document in order to get understanding and develop knowledge. Another instrument was tables of students' errors which helped the researcher to classify and briefly explained the errors committed by students in their drafts. The researcher needed several steps to collect the data which were necessary in this research. The data procedure of the error analysis included the following steps. The first step was collection of samples. Second, identification of error. Third, classification of errors, identifies the types of errors and causes of errors based on surface strategy taxonomy. Fourth, explanation of errors and causes of errors. Fifth, evaluation of errors and causes of error.

The data in this study were analyzed by using several steps. Firstly, the researcher analyzed the English Education students' thesis and found the errors based on surface strategy taxonomy theory. Secondly, classified the errors into four subcategories of surface strategy taxonomy such as omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Thirdly, classified the causes of errors into four subcategories such as overgeneralization, neglecting the constraints of rules, application of incomplete rules, and hypothesis of the wrong concept. Fourthly, the researcher continued to calculate

the total of errors based on the types of error and causes of error. The researcher made conclusion from the data based on total of errors result in the form of percentage. Fifthly, described the data systematically based to the types of errors and causes of errors related to the supported theories in table form.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The calculation of percentage of error showed the percentage of each type of errors and causes of error that were undertaken by the students in writing Research Method Chapter of thesis. This used to know the frequency errors and causes of error that made by the students based on the data analysis.

Table 1. Frequency of Students' Errors

Kind of Errors	Number of Errors	Percentage of Errors
Omission	18	16,5%
Addition	21	19,3%
Misformation	69	63,3%
Misordering	1	0,9%
Total	109	100%

The errors found on the use of past tense in Research Method Chapter of English education Students' Thesis in year 2018 are 109 errors from the 5 samples data. Those errors classified into four subcategorize such as 18 errors found in omission, 21 errors found in addition, 69 errors found in misformation, and 1 error found in misordering. From the total of errors result in the form of percentage, the researcher found 16,5% errors in omission, 19,3% errors in addition, 63,3% errors in misformation, and 0,9% errors in misordering.

Table 2. Frequency Causes of Errors

Kind of Errors	Number of Errors	Percentage of Errors
Overgeneralization	75	96,2%
Neglecting the constraints of rules	0	0%
Application of incomplete rules	2	2,5%
Hypothesis of the wrong concept	1	1,3%
Total	78	100%

Based from the total causes of errors result percentage, the causes of errors on the use of past tense in Research Method Chapter of English education Students' Thesis in year 2018 are 78 errors from the 5 samples data. Those causes of errors were classified into four subcategorize such as 75 causes of errors in overgeneralization, 0 causes of errors in neglecting the constraints of rules, 2 causes of errors in application of incomplete rules, and 1 causes of errors in hypothesis of the wrong concept. From the total causes of errors result in the form of percentage, the researcher found 96,2% causes errors in overgeneralization, 0% causes of errors in neglecting the constraints of rules, 2,5% causes of errors in application of incomplete rules, and 1,3% causes errors in hypothesis of the wrong concept.

Types of Error Description

Omission

Omission errors is mostly committed by the students. It happened when the students write a sentence which is not in a well-formed utterance. According to Umar (2015) omission error is characterized by the absence of an item that must be appear in a well-formed utterance. It indicates

that the content or grammatical morpheme, did not appear in a well- formed utterance. On the other hand, it must be constructed content and grammatical morpheme to carry understandable meaning.

From the data that was analyzed, there were 18 or 16,5% errors found in omission. The following sentences were presented as examples of the omission errors that were made by the students.

Table 3. Sample Sentences of Students’ Omission Errors

No.	Sentences
1.	The researcher will <i>observe</i> the situation in the class
2.	The researcher will only <i>act</i> as an observer that attentively <i>watch</i> and <i>listen</i> to the movie.
3.	There are three kinds of instrument (...) used in this study.

From the first sample sentence “*The researcher will observe the situation in the class*”, the omission error can be identified from the word “observe”. The word omitted suffix -ed each verb. Because the sentence was categorized form of simple past tense. Thus, the verb used V2 (past tense) should be added by the suffix -ed to the form of regular verb. Therefore, the sentence supposed to be “*The researcher observed the situation in the class*”.

Second types of omission error were made by the student in the second sample sentence. The omission error of suffix –ed such as “*The researcher will only act as an observer that attentively watch and listen to the movie*”. The omission error could be identified from the word “act”, “watch” and “listen”. The words omitted suffix -ed each verb. Because the sentence was categorized form of simple past tense. Generally, the form of V2 (past tense) by adding the suffix -ed to the following form of regular verb. Thus, the sentence supposed to be “*The researcher acted as an observer that attentively watch and listen to the movie*”.

The third sample sentence “*There are three kinds of instrument (...) used in this study*”. This kind of errors happened because the students did not appear as a grammatical morpheme, so it should be added “that”. Moreover, the sentence categorized noun clause. Thus, the correct sentence should be “*There were three kinds of instrument that used in this study*”.

Addition

In contrast with omission errors that curtain item disappears. Addition errors is errors categorize that certain item appears in learners’ sentences production. Umar (2015) termed such errors, as addition errors that are presence if item must not appear in a well-formed utterance. The students did error addition because the word was written by did not appear in a well-formed utterance. It means that the presence of an unnecessary item which appeared in a well-formed sentence.

From the data that was analyzed, there were 21 or 19,3% errors found in addition. The following sentence were presented as examples of the addition errors that made by the students.

Table 4. Sample Sentence of Students’ Addition Errors

No.	Sentence
1.	After teaching learning done, the researcher <i>will</i> give close ended questionnaire to the students.
2.	After downloading, the video played and <i>reading</i> the script in order to know the whole of speech.
3.	The researcher <i>will</i> describe all the data.

From the first sample sentence “*After teaching learning done, the researcher will giveclose ended questionnaire to the students*”, the students made an addition error. It showedthat adding a word “will” was an unnecessary word because simple past tense is tense that indicates that an

activity or situation began and ended at a particular time in the past (Azar, 2006), “will” indicated an activity that will be in progress at a time in the future. The students should omit inappropriate preposition that is on. Thus, the correct sentence supposed to be “*After teaching learning done, the researcher gave close ended questionnaire to the students*”

The second sample sentence was the addition error could be identified from the sentence “*After downloading, the video played and reading the script in order to know the whole of speech*”. Because the sentence categorized form of simple past tense. The word “reading” categorize irregular verb. Then, the V2 (past tense) must be “read” by omit the suffix -ing. Thus, the sentence supposed to be “*After downloading, the video played and read the script in order to know the whole of speech*”.

The third sample sentence “*The researcher will described all the data*”, the students made an addition error. It showed that adding a word “will” was an unnecessary word because simple past tense is tense that indicates that an activity or situation began and ended at a particular time in the past (Azar, 2006), “will” indicated an activity that will be in progress at a time in the future. The students should omit inappropriate preposition that is on. Thus, the correct sentence supposed to be “*The researcher described all the data*”.

Misformation

Misformation error becomes the most frequent error happened by the students in their thesis writing. On the other words, students commonly make misformation error in their thesis. According to Umar (2015), misformation errors are characterized by the use of wrong form of the morpheme of structure. The students committed this error because they did not write an appropriate form of morpheme or structure.

From the data that was analyzed, there were 69 or 63,3% errors found in misformation. The following sentence were presented as examples of the misformation error that made by the students.

Table 5. Sample Sentence of Students’ Misformation Errors

No.	Sentence
1.	The design of this study <i>is</i> the descriptive qualitative.
2.	The researcher <i>intends</i> to describe the process of using google map picture in teaching speaking asking direction.
3.	That is, this research <i>rewrites</i> the events that <i>have</i> been experienced or past, such as vacations, experiences, etc.
4.	This chapter <i>presents</i> the purpose of this study <i>is</i> to describe the use of WhatsApp application to teaching writing recount text to tenth grade students of SMA PGRI 5 Sidoarjo.
5.	The researcher also <i>make</i> documentation on all activities happened on teaching writing recount text using WhatsApp application <i>done</i> by teacher and the students.

From the first sample sentence “*The design of this study is the descriptive qualitative*”. This occurred in word “is”. Misformation error was occurred because of an inappropriate word. The error in word “is” should be modified to “were” because it was a verb that should be changed to the past tense. Therefore, the correct sentence should be “*The design of this study was the descriptive qualitative*”.

Then, from the second sample sentence “*The researcher intends to describe the process of using google map picture in teaching speaking asking direction*”. This occurred in word “intends”. Misformation error was occurred because of an inappropriate word. The error in word “intends” should be modified to “intended” because it was a verb that should be changed to the past tense.

Therefore, the correct sentence should be *“The researcher intended to describe the process of using google map picture in teaching speaking asking direction”*.

Third, the sample sentence *“That is, this research **rewrites** the events that **have** been experienced or past, such as vacations, experiences, etc”*. This committed a misformation error that happened twice in the sentence. Those occurred in words “rewrites” and “have”. Misformation error was occurred because of an inappropriate word. The error in word “rewrites” should be modified to “rewrote”. Besides, the error in word “have” should be modified to “had”. because those were a verb that should be changed to the past tense. Thus, the sentence should be *“That is, this research rewrote the events that had been experienced or past, such as vacations, experiences, etc”*.

The fourth sample sentence *“This chapter **presents** the purpose of this study **is** to describe the use of WhatsApp application to teaching writing recount text to tenth grade students of SMA PGRI 5 Sidoarjo”*. This occurred in word “presents”. Misformation error was occurred because of an inappropriate word. The error in word “presents” should be modified to “presented” because it was a verb that should be changed to the past tense. Therefore, the correct sentence should be *“This chapter presented the purpose of this study is to describe the use of WhatsApp application to teaching writing recount text to tenth grade students of SMA PGRI 5 Sidoarjo”*.

Later, the fifth sample sentence *“The researcher also **make** documentation on all activities happened on teaching writing recount text using WhatsApp application done by teacher and the students”*. This occurred in words “make”. Misformation error was occurred because of an inappropriate word. The error in word “make” should be modified to “made” because those were a verb that should be changed to the past tense. Thus, the sentence should be *“The researcher also made documentation on all activities happened on teaching writing recount text using WhatsApp application that had been done by teacher and the students”*.

Misordering

Misordering error is low frequently happened by the students in students’ thesis. Language learners sometimes make errors on the placement of morphemes or group of morphemes in the sentence they produce (Umar, 2015). Misordering error is kind of errors occurred when the students did not place a morpheme or group of morphemes correctly in an utterance.

From the data that was analyzed, there were 1 or 0,9% errors found in misordering. The following sentence were presented as examples of the misordering errors that made by the students.

Table 6. Sample Sentence of Students’ Misordering Errors

No.	Sentence
1.	The class is consisted of 46 students are 46 male but the researcher only takes 5 students who will be the subject.

From the first sample sentence *“The class **is** consisted of **46 students are 46 male** but the researcher only **takes** 5 students who **will be** the subject”*. It showed that committed mis-ordering which “46 students are 46 male”. Moreover, it should “46 male students”. This error occurred because morpheme or group of morphemes was incorrectly in an utterance. Thus, the sentence should be *“The class was consisted of 46 male students but the researcher only took 5 students who were the subject”*.

Causes of Error Description

Overgeneralization

Overgeneralization cause when learners tend to use their common senses and come to generalization of certain sets of grammatical rules. In simple terms, there are two reasons of overgeneralization errors: (1) the learner's creation of one deviant structure in place of two regular

structures. (2) the result of the second language learners' attempts to decrease or reduce their linguistic burden. From the data that were analyzed by the researcher, there were 75 or 96,2% causes errors found in overgeneralization. The following sentence were presented as examples of the overgeneralization errors caused that made by the students.

Table 7. Sample Sentence of Overgeneralization Error Causes

No.	Sentence
1.	They are, 1. Field note 2. Questionnaire 3. Observationcheck list.
2.	Preparing all of the instruments to collect the data.

First, the sample sentence “*They are, 1. Field note 2. Questionnaire 3. Observation check list*”. The student used of form or construction in others context where it should not apply. To be “are” indicated as the form of the infinitive. The sentence should be changed into V2 (past tense). The sentence supposed to be “*They were, 1.) Field note 2.) Questionnaire, and 3.) Observation check list*”.

Then, the second sample sentence “*Preparing all of the instruments to collect the data*”. The student used of form or construction in others context where it should not apply. The verb “preparing” indicated as the form of the progressive tenses. The sentence should be changed into V2 (past tense). The sentence supposed to be “*Prepared all of the instruments to collect the data*”.

Neglecting the constraints of rules

This cause appears when it was closely related to the generalization of deviant structures which learners failed to observe the restriction of existing structure. Consequently, the application of rules to context where they did not apply. From the data that was analyzed by the researcher, there were 0 or 0% errors cause found in neglecting the constraints of rules. ***Application of Incomplete Rules***

This cause happens when learners did not apply all the rules they have learned, which is due to incomplete learning. In other words, they do not completely master the rules and their application, and therefore they do not implement those rules in accordance with the circumstances. From the data that was analyzed by the researcher, there were 2 or 2,5% errorscause found in application of incomplete rules. The following sentence were presented as examples of the application of incomplete rules errors caused that made by the students.

Table 8. Sample Sentence of Application of Incomplete Rules Error Causes

No.	Sentence
1.	The class is consisted of 46 students are 46 male but there researcher only takes 5 students who will be the subject.
2.	The subject of this study will be the English and students of X at SMA PGRI 5 Sidoarjo.
3.	The source of the data in this research will be in the form of data that will be in the form of data that will be produced by the English teacher of tenth grade of SMA PGRI 5 Sidoarjo and the students of XII class

From the first sample data “*The class is consisted of 46 students are 46 male but the researcher only takes 5 students who will be the subject*”, instead “*The class was consisted of 46 male students but the researcher only took 5 students who were the subject* “. The student made incomplete application of rules can be also named as failure to achieve complete knowledge of the second language in grammatical rules. Thus, the student faced a difficulty in formulating correct sentence.

Then, from the second sample data “*The subject of this study will be the English and students of X at SMA PGRI 5 Sidoarjo*”, instead “*The subject of this study were the English and students X grade of SMA PGRI 5 Sidoarjo*”. The student made incomplete application of rules can

be also named as failure to achieve complete knowledge of the second language in grammatical rules. Thus, the student faced a difficulty in formulating correct sentence.

The third sample sentence “*The source of the data in this research will be in the form of data that will be in the form of data that will be produced by the English teacher of tenth grade of SMA PGRI 5 Sidoarjo and the students of XII class*”, Instead “*The source of the data in this research was in the form of data that was produced by the English teacher of tenth grade of SMA PGRI 5 Sidoarjo and the students of grade XII*”. The student made incomplete application of rules. It can be also named as failure to achieve complete knowledge of the second language in grammatical rules. Thus, the student faced a difficulty in formulating correct sentence.

Hypothesis of The Wrong Concept

The students might form hypotheses about some grammatical rules of the second language. Hypothesis of the wrong concept that is deviation that occurs because of wrong knowledge about the rules of the second language (Sari, 2019). From the data that was analyzed by the researcher, there were 1 or 1,3% errors cause found in hypothesis of the wrong concept. The following sentence were presented as examples of the hypothesis of the wrong concept errors caused that made by the students.

Table 9. Sample Sentence of Hypothesis of the Wrong Concept Error Causes

No.	Sentence
1.	The researcher always brought field note because it completed the researcher’s observation based on the fact without any manipulation.

From the first sample sentence showed wrongly sentence because the form of the sentence was past tense. The word “always” used to express habitual or every day activities. The wrong concept of deviation was made by student. Thus, the correct sentence supposed to be “*The researcher brought field note because it completed the researcher’s observation based on the fact without any manipulation*”.

CONCLUSION

The primary objective of this research was to examine the errors in the use of past tense found in the research method chapters of theses written by English education students in 2018. The study identified four types of errors: omission (19.7%), addition (21.3%), misformation (56.5%), and misordering (2.5%). These findings underscore the challenges students encounter in accurately applying grammatical rules in academic writing. The causes of these errors were analyzed and categorized as follows: overgeneralization (91.6%), neglecting rule constraints (2.4%), incomplete rule application (3.6%), and misconceptions (2.4%). The prevalence of overgeneralization suggests a need for targeted interventions to enhance students' understanding and application of past tense rules. Recommendations include implementing regular evaluations to prevent recurring errors and providing additional training for researchers to improve their proficiency in past tense usage within thesis chapters. By analyzing these data, valuable insights were gained into error patterns, highlighting persistent difficulties in achieving grammatical accuracy. This study serves as a reference for future research endeavors exploring similar themes, aiming to offer practical solutions for minimizing errors and enhancing the quality of academic writing among English education students.

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