

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Writing is a crucial skill in language learning. Through writing, one can express thoughts, convey messages, and improve critical thinking skills. According to Nation (2022), writing is an essential skill in second language learning. Writing not only enables students to convey information but also fosters deeper understanding through the steps of composing, editing, and organizing ideas in a structured manner. This confirms that writing plays a significant role in improving students' critical thinking and academic communication skills.

For university students, academic writing skills are an important competency, especially for students majoring in English education or study programs that require the production of accurate and standardized texts. In this context, understanding and mastering types of academic texts is a very important aspect. Among different text types, report text is important in academic writing as it conveys factual information and demands clarity in the arrangement. One of the critical grammatical issues in writing a report text is the simple present tense, which is mainly used for general truths, facts, and definitions (Gerot & Wignell, 1994). That's why grammatical issues, especially the use of the simple present tense, are important for students. With these issues, identifying specific problem parts through error analysis becomes crucial to improving their grammar.

Error analysis is still deemed a viable method for determining the problem areas of language learners, especially in the peripheral skills such as grammar. One

of the earliest taxonomies in this area is the Surface Strategy Taxonomy (hereafter SST) developed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982), which divides grammatical errors into four classes: omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. Even today, researchers (Oktaviana, 2024; Tokan & Sari, 2024) find it pertinent and utilize it, considering how a systematic approach to identifying and classifying learners' grammatical errors is invaluable. These recent taxonomy uses testify to SST's foundational role in researching EFL learners' writing skills.

In fact, there have been several studies regarding grammatical errors in students' writing. For instance, Rahmawati (2021) analyzed errors using the simple present tense in descriptive texts written by eighth-grade students at SMP Hang Tuah Manado. The research findings show that the most common mistakes were misformation and omission, with misformation being the most common error. The research indicates that students struggled with using verbs correctly, especially the verb "*be*," in simple present sentences, which suggests that they were not familiar with the subject-verb agreement rule. The results showed that in order to prevent such problems, grammar instruction needs to be more explicit.

Moreover, the research by Sari et al. (2023) at SMAN 1 Godong examined errors in writing descriptive texts committed by students and identified four types of errors referring to SST (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982): omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. This is a qualitative descriptive research and the data are obtained from students' writing outcomes and are then analyzed by using an error taxonomy model. The results indicated that the most frequent error was misformation, and the ranking was as follows by omission, misordering, and

addition. Furthermore, the researcher pointed out that the majority of the errors were caused by students' ignorance of the simple present tense verb form and their inability to understand the application of subject-verb agreement. This research highlights the importance of explicitly teaching grammar to learners in order to help them become better writers.

Similar findings were also presented by Marzona (2023) in an analysis of tense errors in students, where misformation was the most dominant type of error. In this study, Marzona examined students' descriptive writing to identify grammatical errors in using the simple present tense. This study revealed that many students still had difficulty distinguishing the correct verb form and applying subject-verb agreement rules. Misformation occurred mainly because students applied the wrong verb form, even though the other sentence structures were correct. This finding indicates that conceptual understanding of the function and form of the simple present tense still needs to be strengthened through more focused and contextual teaching strategies.

A study by Hapsari (2020) also found that subject-verb agreement and article usage were the most problematic areas. Hapsari observed that the influence of Bahasa Indonesia was a significant cause of these errors, particularly because Indonesian has no set grammatical rules governing articles and subject-verb agreement. In addition, research participants struggled with forming complicated sentences, which led to rampant errors with clauses, also known as 'clause misconceptions' and 'sentential structuring errors'. The research pointed out that inadequate instruction in grammar is the reason for persistent error.

Previous research from Hapsari (2020) attracted the attention of researchers to conduct more in-depth research on grammatical problems among university students, especially since research subjects like this are still relatively few. The majority of research focuses on secondary-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, specifically on their descriptive writing abilities. However, the focus of this study is university students majoring in English language education, who should possess better language skills, particularly in academic writing. Pasaribu (2022) found that most students are not familiar with the use of tenses in academic writing, but they recognize that mastering tenses is important for improving their writing skills.

The selection of report text in this study was not without reason. Compared to descriptive text, report text requires more precise and objective language. The Social purpose of the report text is to give factual information on a specific subject. Therefore, this text demands higher language skills, particularly in constructing grammatically correct sentences. Research by Dania et al. (2024) also shows that many students still struggle to write report texts, primarily due to a lack of mastery of text structure, word choice, and appropriate grammar, such as the simple present tense, which is very dominant in these texts.

Furthermore, descriptive texts typically focus on people, locations, or things that require in-depth explanation. On the other hand, report texts present factual and systematic information about a group of objects or phenomena. This difference indicates that report texts present different challenges than other text types, according to their communicative purpose and the types of participants in the text.

Generalizations in report texts are also structured more strictly because they demand objectivity and accurate sentence structure, especially in the use of the simple present tense.

Although the SST has been used in numerous studies to analyze grammatical errors, these studies have mainly concentrated on younger students. However, in this study, the researcher used SST to examine the kinds and prevalence of grammatical errors that university students commit in writing report texts in the simple present tense. According to the researcher, SST really helps the researcher to analyze grammatical errors made by university students in detail.

The lack of focus on error frequency and classification based on SST in the analysis of university students' writing represents another research gap. Few studies have addressed the frequency of each type of error, which is crucial for spotting error patterns and creating effective intervention strategies, even though some have looked at grammatical errors generally. Most existing studies used SST to classify errors as omission, addition, misformation, and misordering, with misformation frequently being the most prominent category. However, those studies commonly dealt with descriptive essays, without closely examining error frequency in academic writing. Therefore, in this study, the researcher examined the types and frequencies of grammatical errors in university students' writing report texts.

This research is urgent because it will contribute to helping university students have good grammar skills, especially in writing report texts. With the identification of common errors, this research aims to assist lecturers or instructors in developing more effective pedagogical instruments to improve university

students' grammatical competence. This assignment is also required because it is recognized that the simple present tense is a fundamental grammatical structure commonly utilized in academic writing, especially in report texts, which demand the precise explanation of general truths and factual information. The inappropriate use of this tense can considerably impact the accuracy and clarity of the information presented in such texts. As stated by Lestari (2020), the use of the correct tense is an important indicator of good writing skills, and errors in tense can interfere with the clarity of the information conveyed. Thus, this study aims to enhance university students' writing by pointing out grammatical aspects that need greater emphasis, namely controlling the tense in particular academic genres, such as report texts.

In short, university students' mastery of grammatical aspects, particularly the simple present tense, is essential, particularly in producing academic writing such as report texts that demand factuality, objectivity, and linguistic accuracy. Despite the centrality of this tense in academic writing, existing studies have shown that learners struggle with its correct usage. Although previous studies have examined grammatical errors within the framework of the SST, they have most commonly focused on high school students and descriptive essays, thereby creating a substantial void in the knowledge of how university students' writing competency operates in more formal academic settings. This research is important because it contributes to enriching error analysis studies by providing empirical evidence regarding the patterns and types of errors in the use of the simple present tense made by university students. This research also provides benefits for lecturers, students, and educational institutions in designing grammar learning strategies that are more

effective and relevant to learners' needs. Therefore, the results of this study are expected to make a real contribution to improving the quality of academic writing learning in the context of learning English as a foreign language.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the background above, the researcher formulates the following research question:

1. What errors do university students make in using the simple present tense in writing report texts?
2. How frequently and what is the percentage of each type of error occurring in university students' writing?

1.3 Research Objectives

Relevant to the problem statement, the researcher will formulate the following research objective:

1. To identify the errors made by university students in using the simple present tense in writing report texts.
2. To indicate the frequency and percentage of each type of error in university students' writing.

1.4 Research Significance

This research is expected to contribute the following benefits:

1. Theoretical Contribution: Expanding knowledge of grammatical errors in EFL writing, particularly in university students' education.
2. Practical Contribution: Providing educators and curriculum developers with insights to design better grammar instruction strategies.

3. Pedagogical Contribution: Helping university students recognize and correct their errors and improve their writing skills.

1.5 Research Scope

The grammatical errors made by university students when writing report texts in the simple present tense will be the main focus of this research. The participants are students enrolled in an English education program, specifically those who have taken academic writing courses. The research aims to analyze the types and frequency of grammatical errors based on the Surface Strategy Taxonomy. This research will not cover grammatical aspects beyond the simple present tense or investigate writing proficiency in other text types.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

To prohibit misunderstanding and get a good understanding, the following terms used in this research need to be defined, as follows:

1.6.1 Error Analysis

One type of language analysis, error analysis, concentrates on students' errors. Errors in the target language are contrasted with those in the target language. According to Brown (2000), error analysis is the concept that students' errors can be viewed, examined, and categorized to reveal the system components that influence the learner and the impact of error-proof learning.

1.6.2 Report Text

A report text is a type of text that presents factual and objective information about an object, phenomenon, or topic in a systematic way. This text describes the characteristics, classification, and other essential aspects of the subject discussed.

Gerot and Wignell (1994) define report text as a text that describes how things are regarding a range of natural, artificial, and social phenomena in our environment.

1.6.3 University Students

University students are individuals currently studying at a university, either undergraduate or postgraduate. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a student is someone who is studying at a university or other place of higher education. Therefore, in the context of this research, students are limited to those registered as active students at the university where the research was conducted.

1.6.4 Writing

Writing is a difficult skill to master. Students must consider concepts and specifics in their writing to make appropriate connections. According to Dalman (2016), writing is an act of communication that requires conveying information for media communication.