

AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN WRITING RECOUNT TEXT

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INFORMASI ARTIKEL

Submitted : 2026-01-31
Review : 2026-01-31
Accepted : 2026-01-31
Published : 2026-01-31

KEYWORDS

Recount Text, Writing Ability, Students' Grammatical Errors.

A B S T R A C T

This study aims to analyze the types of grammatical errors made by students in writing recount texts and to identify the most frequently occurring errors. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design and was conducted at Adisucipto Catholic Junior High School, involving 17 eighth-grade students as research subjects. Data were collected through recount text writing assignments based on predetermined topics. The analysis focused on four main grammatical aspects, namely grammar, spelling, tenses, and pronouns. The results showed that students' grammatical ability in writing recount texts was in the low to moderate category, with an overall average score of 2.08. Grammar was the most difficult aspect for students to master, followed by tenses, while pronouns were the easiest aspect to master. Grammar errors were generally related to sentence structure, subject-verb agreement, and the use of auxiliary verbs. Errors in tenses included the use of the present tense instead of the past tense and the mixing of several tenses in one paragraph. The findings of this study indicate the need to implement learning strategies that are more focused on mastering grammar and tenses, as well as the importance of integrating grammar exercises into writing activities so that students can apply grammatical rules contextually.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the language skills that learners should master in learning English. In writing skills, learners would be able to put their feelings, ideas, arguments, willingness, and their minds into words, sentences, and even stories. However, writing skill needs good English knowledge because the level of writing skill is more complex. As a result, learners always make some errors when they write text, especially for EFL learners. According to Beniario & Saputra in Dewa et al., (2023:15) Writing is a very important skill for students to learn and master because writing is included in every language learning and teaching activity.

Moreover, writing is a form of communication that uses visible symbols to represent spoken language. It is one of the most important tools that humans have

developed, allowing us to share our thoughts, ideas, and stories with others across time and space. Dwihandini et al in Abrar et al., (2023:401) assert that writing is one of the most challenging language skills because it requires the writers to generate their writing ideas and develop them systematically.

Students sometimes struggle when it comes to creating recall material. It was backed up by Za'in (2017, p.56), who discovered that most students struggled with five aspects of recount text writing: content, organization, vocabulary, language, and mechanics. It occurred as a result of grammatical inadequacies, a lack of knowledge and understanding, a lack of experience, and a lack of educational background. Sari (2017, p.1) also claims that most students struggle with capitalization, punctuation, inexplicitness/fuzziness, organization/illogical sequencing, spelling, and grammatical issues when producing recount texts. It may be deduced that most students struggle to write recount texts due to a lack of ideas, a lack of order or illogical sequence, a limited vocabulary, a lack of mechanical understanding, inexplicitness issues, and grammatical errors.

A recount text is a type of narrative text that recounts a past event or experience. It is commonly used to describe personal experiences, recount historical events, or share travel experiences. Recount texts are typically written in the simple past tense and use time connectives to link events together in chronological order. Recount text is a core concept in the English language curriculum under Merdeka's curriculum. Indonesia's new education framework. It is taught across various grades, with students developing their ability to understand, write, and analyze recount texts. Writing recount text is not easy because some of the criteria that must be considered such as students must be able to master past tense and structure in Indonesia and English make students feel difficult in writing. According to Sianipar et al., in Dewa et al., (2023:16) a recount text is a kind of text that chronologically retells an event or past event. Recount text has the purpose of retelling or informing past events as well as entertaining the readers. While a lot of students still get errors in writing recount text. These kinds of errors usually happen when arranging ideas and grammatical sentences. Then, in writing recount text needs to pay attention to structure text such as orientation which means introducing the topic and setting the scene, events means retelling the events of the story in chronological order and the last is reorientation means concluding the story and may summarize the main points.

In addition, some studies looked into students' challenges in composing recall texts. Students' problem in creating recount text, according to Harris, Ansyar, and Radjab (2014, p.24), is in using language features. The employment of the simple past tense, action verb, connecting verb, and pronoun all contribute to this issue. Husna and Multazim (2019, p. 30) go on to say that the student's difficulties in creating recount text were related to content, organization, language, mechanics, and generic structure, particularly in terms of orientation and reorientation. Finally, students struggle with linguistic characteristics, general structure, and areas of writing that must be considered, such as content, organization, syntax, and mechanics. Furthermore, Mustika, Udin, and Susanti (2020, p.1) elaborate on the students' difficulties are in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, and sentence structure. These difficulties are particularly encounter when writing a recount text. Having a lack of vocabulary can make students stuck on doing writing activities. Not only that, the organization of recount text or commonly known as its generic structure also can hinder students to produce their well-

organized recount text. Moreover, less ability to write grammatical sentences can make students frustrated in the writing process.

Research questions

1. What types of grammatical errors do students make in writing recount texts?
2. Which types of grammatical errors occur most frequently in students' recount texts?

Objectives of the study

1. To identify the types of grammatical errors made by students in writing recount texts.
2. To classify the frequency of each type of grammatical error.

Literature review

A. writing skill

Writing has been with us for several thousand years, and nowadays is more important than ever. Having spread steadily over the centuries from clay tablets to computer chips, it is poised for further dramatic advances. Although hundreds of millions of people are still unable to read and write, humanity relies on writing to an unprecedented extent. It is quite possible that, today, more communication takes place in the written than in the oral mode. There is no objective measure, but if there were any doubts, the Internet explosion has laid to rest the idea that for the human race at large writing is only a 'minor' form of communication. It is not risky to call writing the single most consequential technology ever invented. The immensity of written record and the knowledge conserved in libraries, data banks, and multilayered information networks make it difficult to imagine an aspect of modern life unaffected by writing. 'Access', the catchword of the knowledge society, means access to written intelligence. Writing not only offers ways of reclaiming the past, but is a critical skill for shaping the future. In Stanley Kubrick's 1968 motion picture '2001: A Space Odyssey' a computer equipped with a perfect speech recognition programme, which is even able to lipread, threatens to overpower the human crew. This is still science fiction. In contrast, the ability of computers to operate in the written mode, to retrieve, process and organize written language in many ways surpasses unaided human faculties. Mastering the written word in its electronic guise has become essential.

According to Azar (2007), the role of grammar is to "help students discover the nature of language, i.e., that language consists of predictable patterns that make what we say, read, hear, and write intelligible" (p.3). As Azar stated, without grammar, people would have only individual words or sounds, pictures, and body language to communicate meaning. Moreover, effective grammar instruction can help students use this knowledge as they write. Through the connection from oral language into written language, teachers can explain abstract grammatical terminology to help students write and read with better proficiency and confidence. As Calkins (1980) suggested, the most helpful way to improve students' command of grammar in writing is to use students' writing as the base for teaching grammatical concepts.

B. Recount text

A recount is a text that tells about past experience or events that can be based on the author's personal or historical events. This type of text is chosen as means in which the students write. It is selected since they can feel free to explore the story that is based on their personal experience and eventually convert their ideas into written form. The purpose of a Recount is to inform and entertain the readers. To attain its purpose, the text needs to involve several steps namely, an orientation which lets the reader know who is involved, where, when and others and the retelling of a series of events in

chronological sequence (Derewianka, 1990). A piece of text that retells past events, usually in the order in which they happened is a recount text. It begins with by telling the reader who was involved, what happened, where the events took place and when it happened (Derewianka, 1990)

In writing recount texts, students have to know the generic structure and language features of that text. According to Gerot and Wignel (1994:194), the generic structure of recount text is orientation, events and re-orientation. Moreover, Roison et.al (2004:45) state that “the organization of recount text is orientation and followed by series of events, and sometimes it has evaluation or reorientation at the end of the text”. Generally, recount texts begin with an orientation to introduce and give the background information that is needed to guide readers’ understanding to next part of the story. Besides generic structure, students must aware about language feature of recount text. According to Gerrot and Wignel (1994:194) “language features of recount text are focus on specific participant, use of material processes (action verb), circumstances place, and time, use past tense, and focus on temporal sequence”. Hardy and Klarwein (1990:4) add that “language features of recount text are use personal recount, use emotive to describe the events, use action verb and mental verb and use past tense”. It can be said that writers will use action verb in past form in writing recount text. In addition, Barwick (1999:6) states that there are some language features in recount texts. They are proper noun and pronoun to identify people, animal, or things. Then, the texts are written in past tense to retell past events. Writers can use varied action verb and adjective to show their feeling. Moreover, writers should include adverbs and adverbial phrases sequence events in time and indicate place. Finally, writers have to use conjunction to combine clauses and connectives to sequence events. Due to the explanation from several experts above, it can be concluded there are some language features of recount texts. They are focus on specific participant, usesimple past tense, use action verb, use linking verb, and use chronological conjunction. The generic structures and language features of recount texts above were used as indicators to know students’ ability in writing recount texts and their difficulties. Assessment is needed in writing. It is used to know how well the students can apply the theory they have already got and then practice it by writing. Weigle (2002:39) says that writing is a skill in language learning and all teachers need to evaluate their students’ writing ability. It can be said that assessment is important for writing. Teachers can assess how the students’ competency in writing to find the students’ difficulties. To access students’ writing ability in recount texts, scoring rubric was used. The scoring rubric was adapted from Hyland (2003:243).

Error and error analysis

According to Johnson & Johnson (1999: 110), “Contrastive analysis is a comparing two linguistics systems, the learners L1 and the target L2 with a view to determining structural similarities and differences. Because of it, making error in learning language is often happens.

Error analysis examines what kinds of errors students make in second language learning (Hinkel in R et al., 2018). Error analysis can also indicate the effectiveness of teaching materials and strategies, and teachers can modify the materials in the syllabus (Khansir, 2012). It helps teachers to detect students’ difficulties in the target language learning and helps them to choose the effective method in teaching the target language (Heydari & Bagheri, 2012).

RESEARCH METHOD

The design of this study is qualitative research. According to Sinurat (2020), qualitative research investigates the meaning of specific or general issues related to social or human problems. This study is qualitative research with a case study design because the data used in this study is not numerical data, but descriptive data. The researcher used a case study design to analyze students' grammatical errors in writing recount texts. This research was conducted at Adisucipto Catholic Junior High School. The subjects of this study were 17 students in class VIIC. The research location for this study was at Sint Adisucipto Catholic Junior High School, Kupang, Jl. Adisucipto No 44 Penfui, Kec. Maulafa, Kupang City, East Nusa Tenggara.

Table 1. Assessment Rubric

| No | Aspect | Score 4 (Excellent) | Score 3 (Good) | Score 2 (Fair) | Score 1 (Lowes) |
|----|----------------|---|--|--|---|
| | Final Score | 80-90 | 60-80 | 40-60 | 0-40 |
| 1 | Grammar | The student uses correct sentence structures with almost no grammatical errors. | There are some grammatical errors, but they do not interfere with meaning. | Frequent grammatical errors affect the clarity of the sentences. | Grammatical errors dominate the text and make it difficult to understand. |
| 2 | Spelling | Words are spelled correctly and consistently, with no spelling errors | Some spelling errors occur, but the meaning remains clear. | Spelling errors are frequent and disturb the reader's understanding. | Numerous spelling errors make the text hard to read. |
| 3 | Tenses | Past tense is used correctly and consistently as required in recount texts. | Some tense errors occur, but the sequence of events is still clear. | Frequent tense errors cause confusion about the time of events. | Tense usage is mostly incorrect and does not reflect a recount text. |
| 4 | Pronoun | Pronouns are used accurately and clearly refer to the intended nouns. | Some pronoun errors occur, but references are still understandable. | Frequent pronoun errors cause unclear references. | Pronoun usage is mostly incorrect and confuses the reader. |

In this writing assignment, the author asked students to write recount texts based on topics prepared by the researcher. Students wrote recount texts within 40 minutes. Each student had to write 100-150 words in three or more paragraphs based on the general structure and language features appropriate for recount texts. After collecting the students' writing, the author assessed whether the students' writing met the general

structure and language features of recount texts. In the data analysis process, the author took several steps. To answer the first research question about general structure and language features, the first thing the researcher did was to read and reread the transcripts to understand the text in depth. Then, the author gave a final score for the students' writing.

RESULTS

Tabel 2. Students result/score

| No | Student Number | Grammar | Spelling | Tenses | Pronoun | Total Score |
|----------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1 | S.01 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 10 |
| 2 | S.02 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 10 |
| 3 | S.03 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 7 |
| 4 | S.04 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 6 |
| 5 | S.05 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 6 |
| 6 | S.06 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 13 |
| 7 | S.07 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 8 |
| 8 | S.08 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 9 |
| 9 | S.09 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 8 |
| 10 | S.10 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 5 |
| 11 | S.11 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 8 |
| 12 | S.12 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 14 |
| 13 | S.13 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 6 |
| 14 | S.14 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 6 |
| 15 | S.15 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 9 |
| 16 | S.16 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 11 |
| 17 | S.17 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 6 |
| Average | | 1,52 | 2,23 | 1,82 | 2,76 | 8,25 |

This section presents the research findings and results based on the analysis of students' grammatical errors in writing recount texts at SMP Katolik Adisucipto. The analysis focused on four main aspects of grammar, namely Grammar, Spelling, Tenses, and Pronoun. The findings are presented through the mean scores of each aspect to describe the students' level of grammatical accuracy and to explain the possible reasons behind the results obtained.

The analysis revealed the following mean scores for each grammatical aspect: Grammar: 1.52, Spelling: 2.23, Tenses: 1.82, Pronoun: 2.76

The total mean score of the four aspects is calculated as follows: $\frac{1.52 + 2.23 + 1.82 + 2.76}{4} = 2.08$.

Grammar received the lowest mean score (1.52), showing that it was the most difficult aspect for students. Many of the errors appeared in sentence structure, subject-verb agreement, and the use of auxiliary verbs.

This low score happened because many students had difficulty forming grammatically correct sentences. Common problems included missing verbs, incorrect word order, and mismatched subjects and verbs. Some students also translated sentences directly from Indonesian into English, which often led to unnatural and incorrect sentence structures. Another factor contributing to the low score was students' limited understanding of basic grammar rules. Grammar is often taught separately from writing practice, so students struggle to apply what they have learned when writing. As a result,

they tend to focus more on expressing ideas than on grammatical accuracy, which negatively affected their grammar performance.

The spelling aspect received a mean score of 2.23, which falls into the moderate category. This result shows that students generally have a reasonable ability to spell common English words, although spelling mistakes were still quite frequent. Most spelling errors occurred in irregular words, words with silent letters, and words that sound similar but have different spellings. This indicates that students tend to rely on phonetic spelling when writing in English. Because English spelling does not always match its pronunciation, students often wrote words based on how they sound rather than their correct written form. Another reason for this result is students' limited exposure to written English materials. Many students are more familiar with spoken English than with written texts, which affects their spelling accuracy. Even though these spelling errors did not usually change the overall meaning of the text, they still reduced the clarity and overall quality of the students' writing.

The tenses aspect obtained a mean score of 1.82, indicating that students faced serious difficulties in using verb tenses correctly. This problem is especially important because recount texts require consistent use of the simple past tense. Many students used present tense forms instead of past tense, mixed different tenses within a single paragraph, or made mistakes in forming past verbs, particularly irregular verbs. For instance, verbs such as go, see, and take were often written in their present forms rather than their correct past forms. This low score may be related to students' limited understanding of the purpose and characteristics of recount texts. Many students did not fully realize that recount texts focus on past events and therefore require the use of past tense verbs. In addition, a lack of practice in using tenses in meaningful contexts caused confusion when students had to choose the correct verb forms in their writing.

The pronoun aspect achieved the highest mean score (2.76) compared to the other aspects, showing that students had a relatively good understanding of pronoun usage. Most students were able to use personal pronouns such as I, we, they, and he correctly in their writing. This higher score can be explained by the fact that pronouns are frequently used in everyday communication and are therefore more familiar to students. Because recount texts usually describe personal experiences, students naturally used first-person pronouns appropriately. However, some mistakes were still found in the use of possessive pronouns and object pronouns. Even so, students' overall performance in this aspect was better than in grammar and tenses, indicating that pronoun usage was less challenging for them.

The overall mean score of 2.08 indicates that students' grammatical ability in writing recount texts is at a low to moderate level. This result shows that students still experience considerable difficulties in applying correct grammatical rules when expressing past experiences in written form. The low overall score is mainly influenced by poor performance in the grammar, and tenses aspects.

Discussion

This study aimed to analyze students' grammatical errors in writing recount texts and to identify the most frequent types of errors made by seventh-grade students at SMP Katolik Adisucipto. Based on the findings, the overall mean score of students' grammatical performance was 2.08, which indicates a low to moderate level of grammatical mastery. This result suggests that students still experience considerable difficulties in applying grammatical rules appropriately when writing recount texts.

The findings show that grammar and tenses were the most problematic aspects for students. Grammar obtained the lowest mean score (1.52), indicating that students had serious difficulties in constructing grammatically correct sentences. Many errors were related to subject–verb agreement, sentence structure, and the use of auxiliary verbs. These results support Azar's (2007) statement that grammar is essential for making language meaningful and understandable. Without sufficient grammatical knowledge, students tend to produce sentences that are unclear or incorrect. In addition, this finding is in line with Calkins (1980), who argues that students often struggle to apply grammatical rules in writing when grammar is taught separately from actual writing practice. The students' tendency to translate sentences directly from Indonesian into English also contributed to grammatical errors, as the grammatical structures of the two languages are different.

The tenses aspect also showed a low mean score (1.82), indicating that students had difficulty using the simple past tense consistently. Since recount texts focus on past events, the incorrect use of tense significantly affected the quality of students' writing. Many students used present tense forms instead of past tense, mixed tenses within a single paragraph, or made errors in irregular verb forms.

Spelling errors were found at a moderate level, with a mean score of 2.23. Although students were generally able to spell common words correctly, errors still occurred frequently, especially in irregular words and words with silent letters. This finding indicates that students often rely on pronunciation when spelling English words. Because English spelling does not always correspond to pronunciation, students tend to write words based on how they sound rather than how they are written.

Among the four aspects analyzed, pronoun usage obtained the highest mean score (2.76). This result indicates that students had a relatively good understanding of pronoun use compared to other grammatical aspects. Most students were able to use personal pronouns correctly, particularly first-person pronouns such as I and we, which are commonly used in recount texts. This finding suggests that students are more familiar with grammatical forms that frequently appear in daily communication. However, some errors were still found in the use of possessive and object pronouns, showing that further improvement is still needed.

Overall, the findings of this study confirm that students' difficulties in writing recount texts are closely related to their limited grammatical mastery, particularly in grammar structure and tense usage. Therefore, it is important for teachers to integrate grammar instruction with writing practice, rather than teaching grammar in isolation. Providing students with more contextualized writing activities, focused feedback, and repeated practice in using past tense forms may help reduce grammatical errors and improve students' writing ability in recount texts.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated students' grammatical errors in writing recount texts at SMP Katolik Adisucipto. The objectives of the study were to identify the types of grammatical errors made by students and to determine which types of errors occurred most frequently. Based on the analysis of students' writing, it can be concluded that students still experience considerable difficulties in applying grammatical rules when writing recount texts.

The findings revealed that grammar and tenses were the most problematic aspects for students. Grammar obtained the lowest mean score, indicating that students had

difficulty constructing grammatically correct sentences, particularly in subject–verb agreement, sentence structure, and the use of auxiliary verbs. The tenses aspect also showed a low score, as many students failed to use the simple past tense consistently, which is a key requirement of recount texts. These difficulties suggest that students have limited mastery of basic grammar rules and lack sufficient practice in applying them in meaningful writing contexts.

Spelling errors occurred at a moderate level, showing that although students were able to spell common words correctly, they still made mistakes in irregular words and words with silent letters. Meanwhile, pronoun usage achieved the highest mean score, indicating that students had a relatively better understanding of pronouns compared to other grammatical aspects. However, minor errors in possessive and object pronouns were still found.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that students' grammatical ability in writing recount texts is at a low to moderate level. The frequent occurrence of grammatical and tense errors shows the need for more effective teaching strategies. Therefore, it is recommended that English teachers integrate grammar instruction with writing practice, provide more exercises focused on the use of past tense, and give constructive feedback on students' writing. By doing so, students are expected to improve their grammatical accuracy and overall writing ability in recount texts.

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