

## **AN ERROR ANALYSIS OF ACTION VERB USAGE IN NARRATIVE WRITING OF ELEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS OF SMKS IMMANUEL MEDAN**

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### **ABSTRACT**

A Thesis The ability to use correct grammar in narrative writing is essential for students to express ideas clearly. The purpose of this study was to identify and analyze errors in the use of action verbs based on the surface strategy taxonomy proposed by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen. This research used descriptive qualitative design. The subjects of this study were fourteen eleventh-grade students of SMKS Immanuel Medan, and the instruments were students' narrative writing tests and interviews. The data analysis followed Ellis's theory of error analysis which includes identifying, describing, explaining, and evaluating. The findings showed that there were three types of errors, namely 226 (96.58%) misformation errors, 7 (2.99%) addition errors, and 1 (0.43%) misordering error, while no omission errors were found. Based on these results, it can be concluded that misformation was the most dominant type of error made by students in using action verbs. It is suggested that teachers provide more explicit instruction and practice in verb usage, while future researchers may use this study as a reference for further analysis in different text types.

*Keywords: Error Analysis, Action Verb, Narrative Text, Writing*

### **ABSTRAK**

Tesis Kemampuan menggunakan tata bahasa yang benar dalam penulisan naratif sangat penting bagi siswa untuk mengekspresikan ide dengan jelas. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis kesalahan dalam penggunaan kata kerja tindakan berdasarkan taksonomi strategi permukaan yang diusulkan oleh Dulay, Burt, dan Krashen. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kualitatif deskriptif. Subjek penelitian ini adalah empat belas siswa kelas sebelas SMKS Immanuel Medan, dan instrumennya adalah tes menulis naratif siswa dan wawancara. Analisis data mengikuti teori analisis kesalahan Ellis yang meliputi mengidentifikasi, mendeskripsikan, menjelaskan, dan mengevaluasi. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ada tiga jenis kesalahan, yaitu 226 (96,58%) kesalahan salah formasi, 7 (2,99%) kesalahan penambahan, dan 1 (0,43%) kesalahan salah urutan, sementara tidak ada kesalahan penghilangan yang ditemukan. Berdasarkan hasil ini, dapat disimpulkan bahwa salah formasi adalah

jenis kesalahan yang paling dominan yang dilakukan oleh siswa dalam menggunakan kata kerja tindakan. Disarankan agar guru memberikan instruksi dan praktik yang lebih eksplisit dalam penggunaan kata kerja, sementara peneliti masa depan dapat menggunakan penelitian ini sebagai referensi untuk analisis lebih lanjut dalam jenis teks yang berbeda.

Kata Kunci: Analisis Kesalahan, Kata Kerja Aksi, Teks Naratif, Menulis

## **A. Introduction**

In many fields, such as tourism, technology, education, and economics, English was one of the world languages that was essential for communication. In the era of globalization, the ability to communicate in English was considered essential in Indonesia. When learning a foreign language, students had to master four essential skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Writing was typically thought of as the most difficult and demanding of these four abilities.

Students making mistakes indicated that they were not fully grasping the linguistic norms they were learning. Rather than being the product of carelessness or randomness, these errors demonstrated a lack of understanding of the pertinent grammatical rules (Corder, 1967). Dulay et al. (in Muis, 2019) categorized errors into four groups: misordering, misformation,

addition, and omission. Because it sought to precisely detect, categorize, and examine the mistakes students made when writing narrative texts, in addition to analyzing the general usage of action verbs, this study employed an error analysis technique. Because it could identify recurrent error patterns and necessitated more focused learning interventions, this method was more suitable than merely examining verb forms.

Based on the researcher's experience during the Praktik Pengalaman Lapangan (PPL) at SMKS Immanuel Medan, it was found that many students still had difficulty using action verbs appropriately in narrative texts. Some common mistakes found included: (1) using verb forms that did not match the time or tense; (2) incorrect conjugation of past tense forms; (3) selecting verbs that did not fit the contextual meaning; and (4) interference from the native language, which was also a significant

cause, as Indonesian did not have verb forms that changed based on time, leading students to translate sentences directly without considering the correct English structure. These errors affected the clarity of the story and the integrity of the narrative structure written by students. The researcher conducted a study titled *“An Error Analysis of Action Verb Usage in Narrative Writing of Eleventh Grade Students of SMKS Immanuel Medan”* in response to this circumstance. The researcher was interested in researching this topic because they had seen a real problem in the field that had not been studied in depth, especially in the vocational school environment.

Mastery of action verbs was an important component in maintaining grammatical structure in narrative writing. The appropriate use of action verbs enabled students to describe actions and events clearly, while helping them construct a coherent and logical storyline. Writing abilities were one of the primary criteria used to evaluate pupils' language ability when they were learning English as a second language. Narrative texts, in particular, required precision in selecting and using verb forms to

ensure that the sequence of events was conveyed effectively. Errors such as the use of incorrect verb tenses or the selection of verbs that did not fit the context could disrupt the clarity of the text's content and the flow of the story. Therefore, analyzing errors in the use of action verbs was crucial to help teachers design more targeted teaching methods and enhance students' writing skills comprehensively.

The researcher chose SMKS Immanuel Medan as the research location because they had previously conducted Field Experience Practice (PPL) at that location, thereby becoming familiar with the characteristics of the students, the learning environment, and the teaching system implemented. This experience facilitated the researchers in establishing communication with the school and obtaining the required data more effectively. Additionally, SMKS Immanuel Medan had a curriculum that encouraged students to develop their English writing skills, making the school relevant for analyzing language errors in foreign language learning.

Previous research conducted by Mei Hygiene, Dina Merris Maya Sari, and Siti Aisyah (2019), entitled

*“Analysis of Errors in the Use of Action Verbs in Writing Recount Texts”*, found that the most common error was misformation (72.72%), followed by omission (18.19%) and addition (9.09%). Students’ inability to differentiate between regular and irregular verb usage, as well as their lack of knowledge of how to construct proper English sentences, were the main causes of these mistakes. However, that study focused on recount texts, whereas the present study specifically analyzed errors in the use of action verbs in narrative texts.

This study aimed to make a meaningful contribution to improving English language learning. By identifying action verb errors, the study sought to help students improve their narrative writing skills and produce more accurate and effective narrative texts with the correct use of action verbs in the correct grammatical context.

## **B. Research methods**

To conduct this study, the researcher employed a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. This approach was selected because it was appropriate for addressing the

research goals, which included identifying, characterizing, and analyzing the different kinds of action verb use errors in the narrative writing of SMKS Immanuel Medan grade XI students. Descriptive qualitative research aimed to understand the phenomenon in depth based on the participants’ point of view and the natural context in which the phenomenon occurred (Cresswell, 2018).

In this context, errors in the use of action verbs were seen as a linguistic phenomenon that occurred naturally in the process of learning English. Therefore, the researcher observed and analyzed the data obtained from the students’ original writings, interviews, and observation results. With the use of this design, the researcher was able to better understand the linguistic and pedagogical elements that led to students making errors when employing action verbs.

This study focused not only on quantifying the frequency of errors, but also on providing qualitative descriptions that explained how and why the errors occurred. The theoretical framework for error analysis created by Dulay, Burt, and

Krashen (1982) was used to examine the gathered data.

### **C. Research Results and Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to identify the types of errors in the use of action verbs found in students' narrative writings and to examine the causes of these errors in the narrative texts written by the eleventh grade students of SMKS Immanuel Medan, by applying the Surface Strategy Taxonomy framework.

The analysis of students' narrative texts revealed four types of errors in the use of action verbs, classified according to the Surface Strategy Taxonomy. The first type, omission, referred to the absence of a required verb within a sentence. For example, the sentence "She very happy when she met her friend" omitted the verb "was," and should have been written as "She was very happy when she met her friend." The second type, addition, occurred when an unnecessary word was inserted, such as in "He didn't went to school yesterday," which should have been corrected to "He didn't go to school yesterday." The third type,

misformation, involved the use of an incorrect verb form, as illustrated by the sentence "They plays football every weekend," which should have been "They play football every weekend." The final type, misordering, was characterized by the incorrect arrangement of words in a sentence, as seen in "She to the store went," which should have been reordered as "She went to the store.".

**Table 1. Findings**

No.	Types of Errors	Number of Errors	Percentage
1.	Omission	—	—
2.	Addition	7	2.99%
3.	Misformat ion	226	96.58%
4.	Misorderi ng	1	0.43%
Total of Errors		234	100%

Table 1. showed the distribution of errors in the use of action verbs found in the narrative texts written by the eleventh-grade students of SMKS Immanuel Medan. The analysis revealed that misformation was the most frequent type of error, with 226 occurrences (96.58%), indicating that many students tended to use incorrect verb forms, such as errors in subject-verb agreement or tense usage.

Addition errors were found 7 times (2.99%), which showed that some students added extra words that were not needed in the sentence, making the grammar incorrect. Misordering appeared only once (0.43%), suggesting that word order problems were rare in the students' writing. No omission errors were identified, meaning that students generally included the necessary action verbs in their sentences without leaving them out. These findings highlighted that the most prominent challenge for the students lay in selecting and forming the correct verb forms, rather than in omitting verbs or arranging them in the sentence structure.

## **Discussion**

### **1. Types of Action Verb Errors**

To answer the first problem question, this section discussed the types of action verb errors identified in students' narrative writing, focusing on the distribution and characteristics of each error category.

The findings reveal that misformation errors (96.58%) dominate, indicating students' difficulty in mastering English verb inflection, especially irregular past tense forms. This aligns with Corder's view of interlanguage, where

systematic errors reflect learners' incomplete internalization of grammatical rules.

Addition errors (7 cases or 2.99%) appeared when students inserted unnecessary morphemes, such as in "*doesn't eats*". This aligned with Ellis's (1997) explanation of overgeneralization, where learners extended a rule they already knew into inappropriate contexts. The errors indicated that students had partially acquired the rules of subject-verb agreement but still faced difficulties applying them consistently in negative or interrogative forms.

Misordering errors (1 case or 0.43%) were the least frequent. The single error, found in question formation, demonstrated students' confusion in applying English syntactic rules that differed from their L1. Richards and Schmidt (2010) argued that such errors were often linked to L1 transfer, where Indonesian sentence structures influenced students' construction of English questions.

Omission errors did not appear in the students' writings. This absence suggested that students already recognized verbs as obligatory elements of English clauses. Rather than leaving verbs out completely,

their errors were more related to incorrect forms. This indicated developmental progress, showing that while students had internalized the necessity of verbs, they were still in the process of mastering their correct inflections.

## **2. The Cause of Narrative Text Error**

To answer the second research problem, the study examined the underlying causes of students' action verb errors by combining the analysis of written texts with supporting evidence from student interviews. Four students who had completed the writing test were interviewed to provide deeper insights into the reasons behind their difficulties in using action verbs in narrative writing. The interview data served to complement the text analysis and strengthen the interpretation of the error sources. The summary of the interview analysis is presented in the following table.

**Table 2. Analysis of Interviews**

No.	Questions	Analysis
1.	Do you know what a narrative text is?	All students reported knowing what a narrative text is, but their depth of understanding differed. Student 1 and
2.	What do you think about writing narrative texts in English?	Student 4 demonstrated broader conceptual awareness by explaining its purpose (to entertain or to recount experiences), while Student 2 and Student 3 provided shorter and less elaborated responses. Student 2 only described it briefly as a "story text," while Student 3 associated it with "a story from the past." These responses suggest only surface level understanding, focusing on definitions instead of recognizing broader functions and structures. This reflects what Ellis (2015) terms as partial acquisition, where learners acquire basic concepts but have not yet developed a deeper awareness of genre features. Students expressed different attitudes toward writing narrative

		texts. Student 1 and Student 4 reported positive views, describing it as enjoyable despite its challenges, whereas Student 2 and Student 3 expressed more negative attitudes due to grammar difficulties. This variation shows that affective factors like motivation and confidence influence second language production (Krashen, 1982). Thus, students' perceptions are not uniform but shaped by their individual proficiency and learning experiences.		translating ideas, and Student 4 highlighted coherence and verb accuracy. These findings align with Corder's (1974) concept of interlanguage, showing that learners rely on partial L2 (English) knowledge while still influenced by their L1 (Indonesia language or local languages). For example, tense related errors often occur because Indonesian verbs do not inflect for tense, leading students to transfer L1 structures into L2 writing. Tense and coherence errors fall into
3.	What challenges do you face when writing a narrative text?	Although all students mentioned grammar-related challenges, the specific areas varied. Student 2 emphasized past tense, Student 3 focused on avoiding grammatical errors, Student 1 struggled with		Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982) surface strategy taxonomy, particularly misinformation and omission. The variation across students suggests that challenges in writing are multi-faceted, extending



		beyond vocabulary to include sentence structure and textual cohesion.			story clarity, Student 2 emphasized character actions, Student 3 stressed descriptive value, and Student 4 noted event clarity. Although they agreed on its importance, their answers reflected different perspectives on its communicative role. This is consistent with Halliday's functional grammar framework, which explains that verbs are central to representing processes in narrative discourse.
4.	Do you know what an action verb is? Can you give an example?	The depth of understanding varied significantly, which suggests differences in exposure or practice. Student 1 mentioned more diverse verbs (run, eat, go), while Student 2 relied on simpler ones (play, jump). This suggests that while declarative knowledge of the concept is shared, procedural mastery particularly in lexical variety differs. Richards and Schmidt (2010) note that this gap shows the difference between knowing a rule and applying it effectively in writing.			
5.	How important is it to use action verbs in writing narrative texts?	All students acknowledged the importance of action verbs, but they emphasized different aspects: Student 1 highlighted			
			6.	Have you ever felt confused about choosing the right action verb?	Students reported experiencing confusion, though for different reasons. Student 2 explicitly noted difficulties with past tense forms, reflecting what Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) classify as misinformation errors. Student 4's difficulty with

		less frequently used verbs points to the influence of input frequency (Ellis, 2015), while Student 1 and Student 3 expressed more general confusion. These differences suggest that confusion stems from both grammatical and lexical gaps, showing the close link between vocabulary and grammar development.	learners face in mastering verb conjugations, particularly irregular patterns, which require memorization rather than rule application.
7.	Have you ever received corrections from your teacher about the incorrect use of action verbs?	All students stated that they had received teacher corrections, especially related to tense usage in irregular verbs. For example, using <i>run</i> instead of <i>ran</i> or <i>go</i> instead of <i>went</i> . Such errors are common in L2 learning and fall under Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982) misformation category. These findings underscore the persistent difficulty	8. What is the main difficulty you face when using action verbs?  The students consistently reported challenges in remembering and applying the past tense form of verbs. Although this appears uniform, it highlights a broader issue of morphological accuracy. According to Corder (1974), such recurring errors are not random mistakes but systematic features of interlanguage. This indicates that learners have not fully internalized verb inflection rules, making tense one of the most error-prone aspects of their writing.
			9. Where did you learn about the use of action verbs?  Most students indicated that their primary source of learning was classroom instruction from teachers,

		although Student 1 also mentioned books and independent writing practice. This difference reflects varied levels of learner autonomy, consistent with Benson (2013), who argues that independent learning fosters deeper language competence. Depending only on classroom input may reduce opportunities for practice, which is essential for developing verb accuracy.			needs. Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis states that sufficient exposure to comprehensible input is vital, and differences in student perceptions may reflect unequal internalization.
10.	Do you feel that action verbs have been sufficiently discussed in class?	Students' responses varied: Student 1 and Student 4 felt the discussion was sufficient (although Student 1 still emphasized practice), whereas Student 2 and Student 3 considered it insufficient. This disparity highlights that classroom instruction may not equally meet all learners'	11.	What is the best way to understand and correctly use action verbs?	Students proposed different strategies: Student 1 emphasized independent writing practice, Student 2 suggested memorization lists, Student 3 called for more intensive learning, and Student 4 combined memorization with practice. These strategies highlight the role of repetition and active use, consistent with behaviorist principles and Ellis' (2015) emphasis on practice for proceduralization. The variation also indicates that students are aware of their learning preferences,

which may influence the effectiveness of their error reduction.

Based on the results of the interviews with the four students, it was concluded that the main cause of errors in the use of action verbs in narrative texts came from the limited mastery of verb forms, especially irregular verbs which were difficult to remember and often used incorrectly in the past tense. Another factor that influenced the errors was the lack of deeper understanding of grammar, particularly past tense, as well as confusion in choosing verbs that suited the context of the story. In addition, some students still depended on the teacher's explanation as the main source without practicing independently, so the knowledge gained was not fully internalized. The different perceptions regarding the adequacy of classroom instruction also showed that students' learning needs were varied, but in general, intensive practice and repetition of verb forms were considered the most effective strategies to reduce errors. Therefore, it was emphasized that the combination of

limited vocabulary, weak grammar mastery, and lack of consistent writing practice became the dominant causes of errors in the use of action verbs in narrative texts.

### **3. Triangulation Data**

To strengthen the validity and credibility of the research findings, data triangulation was applied in this study. Triangulation, as explained by Sugiyono (2017), was a technique that involved using multiple sources and methods of data collection to obtain more comprehensive and reliable data. This approach helped minimize errors and ensured that the research results truly described what was happening in the real situation.

In this research, two types of triangulation were employed: source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation involved collecting data from various participants such as students. Technique triangulation was done by combining different data collection methods, including written tests, interviews, and document analysis. The summary of data triangulation was presented in the table below:

**Table 3. Triangulation Data**

<b>Data Source and Technique</b>	<b>Key Findings</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Document Analysis (Students' narrative texts)	Students often used the base form of verbs instead of the correct past tense (e.g., <i>go</i> instead of <i>went</i> , <i>break</i> instead of <i>broke</i> ) and sometimes left out necessary verbs.	This shows that students have a limited understanding of past tense verbs, especially irregular ones, resulting in errors like misformation and omission.
Student Interviews (4 students)	Students knew what action verbs are and why they matter but felt confused about their past tense forms, often translating directly from Indonesian and having few chances to practice.	This confirms that limited exposure, language transfer issues, and grammar challenges are main reasons behind the students' errors.

Based on the data collected from document analysis and student interviews, it could be concluded that students' errors in using action verbs in narrative texts were mainly caused by limited mastery of past tense forms and students' reliance on direct translation from their native language. The triangulation of these data

sources strengthened the validity of this conclusion by providing a comprehensive view from students' written work, classroom practices, and students' own perspectives.

## **E. Conclusion**

Based on the results of this study, the conclusions are as follows:

1. The errors found in the use of action verbs in narrative texts by eleventh-grade students at SMK S Immanuel Medan were predominantly misformation errors, which occurred 226 times or 96.58% of all errors. Addition errors appeared 7 times (2.99%), misordering errors occurred only once (0.43%), and no omission errors were observed. This showed that students mainly faced difficulties in correctly forming verb forms in their writing.
2. Interviews with several students revealed that these errors mainly resulted from a lack of understanding of verb forms and tenses, confusion about applying grammar correctly in narrative writing, and insufficient practice. Students reported challenges in distinguishing correct from

incorrect verb forms, especially in verb construction.

3. Triangulation of data from document analysis and interviews confirmed consistent error patterns, with misinformation errors being the most common. This consistency strengthened the credibility of the findings and indicated ongoing difficulties students faced in using action verbs appropriately in narrative texts.

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