



The Second Year Students' Ability in Using Simple Past Tense Through Narrative Text at Palopo

Cokroaminoto University

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026 - 06- 01 Revised: 2026 06-18 Accepted: 2026 06-30	<i>This research deals with to find out and describe the ability of the second-year students in using Simple Past Tense through narrative text at Cokroaminoto Palopo University. The population of this research was all the second-year students of Elementary School Teacher Education Study Program in academic year 2025-2026. The total sample was 30 students. The researcher used the purposive sampling. Based on the findings and discussion, the researcher concludes that the second-year students of the Elementary School Teacher Education Study Program at Cokroaminoto Palopo University have a good ability in using the Simple Past Tense through narrative text.</i>
Keywords: Students' Ability, Simple Past Tense, Narrative Text	<i>This conclusion is supported by the students' mean score of 75.5, which falls into the good category according to the classification criteria. The findings revealed that most students were able to identify and apply the Simple Past Tense correctly in narrative texts. They demonstrated an understanding of past verb forms, sentence structures, and the use of regular and irregular verbs.</i>
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1. Introduction

English is one of the most widely used international languages in the world and plays a significant role in communication, education, science, technology, and global interaction. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language from elementary school to higher education. The primary objective of English teaching is to enable students to communicate effectively and to develop their competence in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. To achieve these competencies, students must possess adequate grammatical competence because grammar serves as the foundation for constructing meaningful and accurate sentences.

According to Yule (2020), grammar is the system of rules that governs how words are combined to create meaningful expressions and sentences. Similarly, Larsen-Freeman and Celce-Murcia (2022) state that grammar is not merely a collection of rules but a resource that enables learners to communicate meaning effectively. Furthermore, Richards and Schmidt (2022) define grammar as the description of the structure of a language and the way linguistic units are combined to form sentences. These definitions indicate that grammar is a crucial component of language learning because it helps learners express ideas accurately and understand language structures appropriately.

One of the most important grammatical aspects in English is the Simple Past Tense. The Simple Past Tense is commonly used to express actions, situations, or events that happened and were completed in the past. According to Grammarly (2024), the Simple Past Tense is a verb tense used to describe actions or events that began and ended in the past. Likewise, Suhartini and Nurlaili (2024) explain that the Simple Past Tense refers to actions or activities carried out by a subject in the past. In addition, Putri and Reflinda (2023) emphasize that mastery of the Simple Past Tense is an important aspect of students' grammatical competence because it frequently appears in English texts. Moreover, Pratiwi, Korompot, and Tahir (2022) state that students often experience difficulties in understanding and applying the Simple Past Tense due to irregular verb forms and differences between present and past structures. Similarly, Naibaho (2023) found that students frequently make errors in using verb forms when applying the Simple Past Tense in narrative texts. These definitions and findings show that the Simple Past Tense is an essential grammatical component that requires continuous practice and understanding.

The importance of the Simple Past Tense is closely related to the teaching of narrative texts. Narrative text is one of the text types commonly taught in English language learning because it enables students to understand stories and past events. According to Anderson and Anderson (2020), a narrative text is a text that tells a story with the purpose of entertaining or informing readers. Similarly, Derewianka and Jones (2021) explain that narrative texts are organized to present a sequence of events involving characters and conflicts that lead to a resolution. Furthermore, Knapp and Watkins (2022) state that narrative texts focus on recounting events in chronological order and generally employ past-tense forms. These definitions indicate that narrative texts are strongly associated with the use of the Simple Past Tense because the events described usually occurred in the past.

In the context of English language learning, grammar remains one of the most challenging aspects for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Despite years of learning English, many students still encounter difficulties in applying grammatical rules accurately. Among various grammar topics, the Simple Past Tense is frequently identified as one of the most problematic areas. Students often struggle with changing verbs into their past forms, distinguishing between regular and irregular verbs, and constructing grammatically correct sentences. These

difficulties occur because English grammar differs significantly from Indonesian grammar, which does not require changes in verb forms to indicate time. As a result, many students tend to transfer the grammatical patterns of their first language into English, leading to errors and misunderstandings.

The challenges in using the Simple Past Tense are also observed among second-year students of the Elementary School Teacher Education Study Program at Cokroaminoto Palopo University. As university students majoring in English Education, they are expected to possess adequate grammatical competence. However, based on preliminary observations, some students still experience difficulties in using the Simple Past Tense accurately when dealing with narrative texts. They often make mistakes in changing verbs into past forms, identifying irregular verbs, and understanding grammatical patterns found in narrative texts. These difficulties may influence their ability to comprehend and produce English texts effectively.

Although many studies have discussed the Simple Past Tense, most previous studies have focused on identifying and analyzing students' grammatical errors in writing activities. Such studies generally emphasize the types and causes of errors rather than describing students' actual ability levels in using the Simple Past Tense. Therefore, there is still limited information regarding students' ability to use the Simple Past Tense through narrative texts as a whole.

Another research gap can be found in the research participants. Most studies on the Simple Past Tense have been conducted among junior and senior high school students. Meanwhile, studies involving university students, particularly those in Elementary School Teacher Education programs, remain limited. Consequently, there is still insufficient information regarding the ability of university students to use the Simple Past Tense in narrative text.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on investigating the ability of second-year students of the Elementary School Teacher Education Study Program at Cokroaminoto Palopo University in using the Simple Past Tense through narrative texts. Unlike previous studies that mainly focused on grammatical errors, this study seeks to describe students' actual ability levels in applying the Simple Past Tense within narrative texts. In addition, the study is conducted in a university context, which has received relatively little attention in previous research.

The urgency of this study is based on the importance of grammatical competence for prospective English teachers. Students of the Elementary School Teacher Study Program are expected to master grammar adequately because it supports their academic performance and future teaching responsibilities. The findings of this study are expected to provide useful information for lecturers in evaluating grammar instruction and designing more effective teaching strategies. Furthermore, the results may help students identify their strengths and weaknesses in using the Simple Past Tense and improve their overall English proficiency. Therefore, conducting the study entitled "The Second-Year Students'

Ability in Using Simple Past Tense through Narrative Text at Cokroaminoto Palopo University" is considered important and necessary.

2. Method

This research uses a descriptive quantitative method. This method is used to describe and analyze the ability of second-year students in using the Simple Past Tense through narrative texts at Cokroaminoto Palopo University. The descriptive quantitative method is appropriate because this research focuses on describing students' ability based on the data obtained from the test results. According to Sugiyono (2022), quantitative data analysis is a process of analyzing numerical data obtained from research instruments to describe, measure, and interpret research findings. The results of quantitative analysis can be presented in the form of scores, percentages, and categories to determine the level of participants' ability.

Data Source and Selection Criteria

The population of this research was the second semester students of elementary school teacher education Study Program of Palopo Cokroaminoto University in academic year 2025/2026. The total number of population was 200 students. The researcher applied the purposive sampling technique because the sample was the students who taught about descriptive text writing. There were 30 students as sample. The sample of this research is selected from the population based on the research needs. The researcher chooses second-year students because they have already received basic English grammar materials, especially Simple Past Tense, which is related to the focus of this research.

Data Collection

In this research, the researcher collects data by giving a test to students to measure their ability in using the Simple Past Tense. The students' answers are analyzed to identify their mastery of Simple Past Tense, including the use of verb forms, regular and irregular verbs, and sentence structures in narrative texts.

Data Analysis

The data is analyzed using quantitative analysis. Quantitative data analysis is used to describe students' ability in using the Simple Past Tense through narrative text based on their test scores.

3. Result

The data were obtained from the students' test results. The test was conducted to measure students' ability in using Simple Past Tense, especially in recognizing verb forms, using regular and irregular verbs, and applying Simple Past Tense in narrative texts.

The data analysis was conducted by calculating the students' scores and classifying them into ability categories. The result of the students' scores can be seen in the following table.

No	Students	Score
1	Student 1	85
2	Student 2	78
3	Student 3	90
4	Student 4	70
5	Student 5	65
6	Student 6	88
7	Student 7	75
8	Student 8	60
9	Student 9	82
10	Student 10	55
11	Student 11	92
12	Student 12	73
13	Student 13	68
14	Student 14	80
15	Student 15	77
16	Student 16	84
17	Student 17	58
18	Student 18	95
19	Student 19	72
20	Student 20	66
21	Student 21	87
22	Student 22	79
23	Student 23	69
24	Student 24	81
25	Student 25	74
26	Student 26	62
27	Student 27	89
28	Student 28	76
29	Student 29	71
30	Student 30	64

Table 4.1 presents the scores obtained by 30 second-year students of the Elementary School Teacher Education Study Program at Cokroaminoto Palopo University in the Simple Past Tense test through narrative text. The table shows that the students achieved different scores, indicating varying levels of ability in using the Simple Past Tense.

Based on the data, the highest score was 95, obtained by Student 18, while the lowest score was 55, obtained by Student 10. Several students achieved scores

above 85, indicating a very good level of mastery of the Simple Past Tense. Meanwhile, some students obtained scores between 56 and 70, which indicates a fair level of ability. Only one student was categorized as poor because the score was within the range of 41–55.

The total score of all students was 2,265, and the mean score was calculated by dividing the total score by the number of students (30). The result showed that the average score was 75.5. According to the score classification criteria, this mean score falls into the Good category.

These findings indicate that most of the second-year students have a good ability in using the Simple Past Tense through narrative text. They were generally able to identify and apply the correct past tense forms in sentences and narrative contexts. However, some students still experienced difficulties, particularly in using irregular verbs and constructing grammatically correct past-tense sentences. Therefore, further practice and reinforcement of Simple Past Tense rules are still needed to improve students' grammatical accuracy.

Table 4.2 Classification of Students' Ability

Score Range	Category	Frequency
86–100	Very Good	5 students
71–85	Good	15 students
56–70	Fair	9 students
41–55	Poor	1 student
0–40	Very Poor	0 students

Based on the calculation above, the average score of the 30 students was 75.5. According to the classification criteria, the students' ability in using Simple Past Tense through narrative text was categorized as "Good". This indicates that most students were able to use Simple Past Tense appropriately, although some students still experienced difficulties, especially in using verb forms and irregular verbs.

4. Discussion

The purpose of this research was to determine the ability of the second-year students of the Elementary School Teacher Education Study Program at Cokroaminoto Palopo University in using the Simple Past Tense through narrative text. Based on the findings, the students obtained a mean score of 75.5, which was classified into the Good category. This result indicates that most students have a satisfactory understanding of the Simple Past Tense and are able to apply it in narrative texts.

The findings show that the majority of students were able to identify and use the Simple Past Tense correctly when completing sentences and understanding narrative texts. This ability is important because narrative texts generally describe events that happened in the past and therefore require the use of the Simple Past

Tense. Students who achieved high scores demonstrated a good understanding of past verb forms, sentence structures, and the use of regular and irregular verbs.

However, the findings also revealed that some students still experienced difficulties in using the Simple Past Tense. The most common errors were related to the use of irregular verbs. Some students were unable to change verbs into their correct past forms, such as using *go* instead of *went* or *buyed* instead of *bought*. These errors indicate that students still have limited mastery of irregular verb forms, which are often considered one of the most challenging aspects of the Simple Past Tense.

Another difficulty found in this research was the misuse of verb forms after the auxiliary verb *did*. Some students used Verb 2 after *did* in negative and interrogative sentences. For example, they wrote "*Did she went to school?*" instead of "*Did she go to school?*" This finding suggests that some students have not fully understood the grammatical rules of the Simple Past Tense.

The findings of this study are in line with Pratiwi, Korompot, and Tahir (2022), who found that students often experience difficulties in using the Simple Past Tense, particularly in changing verbs into their past forms and distinguishing between regular and irregular verbs. Similarly, Naibaho (2023) reported that students frequently make errors in verb forms and sentence structures when using the Simple Past Tense in narrative texts.

Furthermore, the results support the theory proposed by Grammarly (2024), which states that the Simple Past Tense is used to describe actions or events that began and ended in the past. Since narrative texts mainly tell stories about past events, students need to master the Simple Past Tense to understand and produce narrative texts effectively.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the second-year students of the Elementary School Teacher Education Study Program at Cokroaminoto Palopo University have a good ability in using the Simple Past Tense through narrative text. Although most students were able to use the tense correctly, some difficulties were still found, especially in the use of irregular verbs and sentence patterns. Therefore, lecturers are encouraged to provide more practice and exercises related to the Simple Past Tense, particularly in the context of narrative texts, to improve students' grammatical accuracy and writing skills.

5. Conclusion

The second-year students of the Elementary School Teacher Education Study Program at Cokroaminoto Palopo University have a good ability in using the Simple Past Tense through narrative text.

This conclusion is supported by the students' mean score of 75.5, which falls into the Good category according to the classification criteria. The findings revealed that most students were able to identify and apply the Simple Past Tense correctly in narrative texts. They demonstrated an understanding of past verb forms,

sentence structures, and the use of regular and irregular verbs.

However, some students still encountered difficulties in using the Simple Past Tense. The most common problems were related to the use of irregular verbs, incorrect verb forms, and errors in constructing negative and interrogative sentences. These difficulties indicate that some students still need further practice and reinforcement in applying the grammatical rules of the Simple Past Tense.

Therefore, it can be concluded that although the overall ability of the second-year students in using the Simple Past Tense through narrative text is categorized as good, continuous improvement is still needed to achieve a higher level of grammatical accuracy.

Suggestion

Students are expected to improve their understanding of the Simple Past Tense by practicing regularly, especially in the use of regular and irregular verbs. They should also read and write more narrative texts to strengthen their grammatical competence and increase their familiarity with past tense structures.

While, Lecturers are encouraged to provide more exercises and learning activities related to the Simple Past Tense, particularly through narrative texts. Additional practice in verb changes, sentence construction, and grammar-focused writing activities may help students improve their mastery of the tense.

In addition, future researchers are suggested to conduct similar studies with a larger sample size or different research designs. They may also investigate students' difficulties in using other English tenses or explore effective teaching strategies for improving students' grammatical competence in writing narrative texts.

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