

Citation: Mahnoor, Rahman, A., & Nadeem, M. (2021). An Analysis of Errors of Present Tense in the Written English of BS Students. *Global Language Review*, VI(I), 41-49. [https://doi.org/10.31703/glr.2021\(VI-I\).05](https://doi.org/10.31703/glr.2021(VI-I).05)



An Analysis of Errors of Present Tense in the Written English of BS Students

Mahnoor *

Abdul Rahman †

Mubashar Nadeem ‡

Abstract

This analytical study was conducted through a mixed-method approach, and a test related to present tenses' active and passive was taken from the BS students. Through open-ended questionnaires, their experiences and problems faced in the learning of present tenses were taken. The analysis of students' errors was conducted using [Corder's \(1981\)](#) conceptual framework, and test results were calculated and analyzed using [Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's \(1982\)](#) surface structure taxonomy, which reflects that students still face issues in their writings skills and make errors related to present tenses as statistical analysis of present tenses' test manifests that students make errors of omission and misinformation related to lexical and auxiliary verbs, subjects, pronouns, subject-verb agreement etc. The percentage of errors of addition and disordering was not high as compared to other errors (omission and misinformation), and the causes of such intralingual errors were ignorance of rules restriction and false concept hypothesis.

Key Words: Errors, Present Tense, Surface Structure Taxonomy, Interlingua

Introduction

Writing is an important medium to communicate with people. To understand properly another language's linguistic system, grammar is an important area that cannot be neglected, and it includes tenses and parts of speech.

According to Baker (Jabbary, 2013), tense is a grammatical category that involves changing the form of the verb to reflect the location of an event in time. The traditional distinction is between the past, present, and future. Every language is capable of expressing events that occur at different times. Students regard tenses as one of the more difficult materials to learn when studying grammar. If students do not understand the tenses of the English language, then it would be difficult for them to advance their English to the upper level.

According to the writer's experience, students frequently make mistakes with verb tense and time signal usage. Students frequently do not understand when the verb form will be used, whether in the past or in the future. If students do not understand the tense correctly, they may misuse the language. It does, in fact, lead to misunderstandings in communication. As a result, an error analysis is required to correct the error.

Error analysis is important in the language learning process because it allows teachers to identify students' strengths and weaknesses. It assists students in reducing errors and improving their abilities in learning the target language. Error analysis provides some benefits to both teachers and students. According to [Corder \(1981\)](#), error analysis

* Lecturer, Department of English, University of Education, Township, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

† Lecturer, Department of English, University of Veterinary & Animal Sciences, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

‡ Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Education, Township, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

Email: drnadeem45@yahoo.com

assists the learner in determining how far he has progressed and what remains to be learned.

The studies were carried out in relation to this study. [Muhsin \(2016\)](#) used a survey method to examine students' errors in using the simple present. The grammatical errors were analyzed and classified after the data was collected. In the use of simple present tense, there were four types of errors: 16.79 percent omission, 5.11 percent addition errors, 75.18 percent missed information errors, and 2.92 percent improper ending errors.

Sukasme, Kantho, and Narrot (2014) investigated grammatical errors in university students' learning of English structures in different tenses. Students' data was collected using a triangulation technique. There were 87.1 percent mistakes in the past perfect tense, 74.2 percent in the simple past tense, 67.4 percent in the present perfect tense, 54.8 percent in the past continuous tense, 48.4 percent in the present simple, 41.7 percent in the future simple tense, and 32.3 percent in the present continuous tense.

Based on the above description, that there are in four types of dominant errors, including omission, addition, missed formation, and improper ordering. So, the main goal of this research is to find out what errors and difficulties students have with present tenses, as well as the frequency and causes of these errors. This research is expected to be important to researchers, students, English teachers, and other people in general.

Aims and Objectives

1. To determine the frequency of different types of errors using present tenses.
2. To investigate the possible causes and reasons of students' deficiencies learning of present tenses.
3. To know the teachers' views and opinions related to students' mistakes in present tenses.
4. To suggest remedies to solve the issues in the teaching and learning of present tenses.

Research Questions

1. What common methodologies are used to

teach present tenses to students in schools and college?

2. What are the frequencies of present tenses' mistakes made by students in their English writings?
3. What are the reasonable and acceptable causes of students' deficiencies in present tenses?
4. What are the views of English language teachers regarding the mistakes of present tenses made by students?

Error

An error is a noticeable departure from a native speaker's adult grammar that reflects the learner's interlanguage competence ([Brown 1980:165](#)). The percentage of a learner's competence in the target language is revealed by error. When students write in English, the majority of them have the potential to make mistakes. It is unavoidable because language learning is a natural process. Error is linked to a student's understanding of the target language.

Procedure of Error Analysis

The theoretical framework used in this research to analyze the errors was S.P Corder's Error analysis procedure. The four steps to carry out the error analysis presented by [Corder \(1981\)](#) are as follows:

Collection of learners' errors: In the first step of the error analysis process, a sample of learner's language is collected.

Identification of errors: In the second step of error analysis, the errors are identified.

Description of errors: The third step is the description of errors. It is compulsory to make a descriptive category of the errors to classify them and to make the frequency of the errors. [Dulay, Burt and Krashen \(1982\)](#) presented the Surface Structure Taxonomy to describe and classify the errors. According to this taxonomy, learners can modify target forms in four ways: omission, addition, misinformation, and misordering.

Explanation of errors: The explanation of learners' errors is the fourth and final step in error analysis. Because language learning involves a complex psychological and neurological process, the

explanation for the errors is considered highly speculative.

The Classification of Errors

The surface structure taxonomy was proposed by [Dulay, Burt, and Krashen in 1982](#) to analyze and classify the learner's errors. The errors are divided into four categories.

Omission

The absence of an item in a well-formed sentence is described as an omission error. This error is caused by the lack of morpheme. For instance:

He sitting *) = He *is* sitting.

Addition

The inverse of omission error is known as addition error. The appearance of an item that should not be present in a well-formed sentence is referred to as an addition error.

she is eats banana*) = she eats banana.

Misinformation

Misinformation error occurs when a learner uses the incorrect form or morpheme of structure in a sentence.

Edward eat a mango*) = Edward eats a mango.

Misordering

The error of misordering is defined as the incorrect placement of one or more elements in a phrase or sentence.

Elephants have nose long*) = Elephants have a long nose.

Causes of Errors

According to [Richards \(1974\)](#), the following are the four causes of intralingual errors made by learners:

Overgeneralization

Overgeneralization occurs when learners apply previously learned strategies in a new situation.

- they are live in this house
- she did not found

Ignorance of the Rule Restriction

Ignorance of rule restrictions is similar to

overgeneralization in that learners are unable to produce or observe the restriction of previously used rules and structure.

For instance: *The boy whom I saw him yesterday.*

Incomplete Application of Rules

The learners fail to use the fully developed structure in the incomplete application of the rules. For example, if a student uses a statement to ask a question by marking the end of the sentence, then the mistake is due to incomplete applicability of the rules, e.g., "he goes to the office?" ([Richards, 1974](#)).

False Hypothesized Concepts

False concept hypothesis is a term used to describe faulty rule learning at various levels. There is a type of interlingual error that stems from a lack of understanding of the target language's distinctions. (E.g., the use of "was" as a sign of past tense in "one day it happened").

Methodology

The paradigm used in this research was the pragmatic paradigm. In pragmatic research, the researcher can maintain stability between subjectively in his own reflection on research and objectivity in the choice of data collection and analysis. ([Morgan, 2007](#)).

Research Design

The design used in this mixed-methods research was Convergent Parallel Mixed methods. The researcher combined both qualitative and quantitative data by using this design to get a complete and detailed analysis of the research problems. ([Creswell, 2014](#)). A mixed-methods approach was used in this research, and data was collected from qualitative and quantitative tools.

Sample

The participants of this research consisted of 330 BS students; selected from three public sector colleges of Lahore. The native languages of students were Urdu and Punjabi and English as a foreign language (FL), and the compulsory subject was being taught to them in schools and colleges. Fifty (50) English language

teachers were also chosen as the population in this research.

The sampling approach used in this research by the researcher was simple random sampling and convenience sampling.

Instruments and Procedure

A: The first open-ended questionnaire was designed for the students of BS (Hons) by the researcher, keeping in view the research questions (appendix-A).

Questions were asked about the students' class, major subjects, semester, first language (F1) and their age; when did they start the learning of tenses and what difficulties did they face in the active and passive voice; how did their teachers explain their errors to them and what feedback was being provided to them. Suggestions were also taken from them related to the teaching and learning of tenses.

B: Another instrument was also used in this research, a test to check the understanding and proficiency of students in tenses. The test was comprised of four sections.

C: The other closed-ended questionnaire was also used to obtain data from the teachers who had been teaching English to these participants in the private sector colleges. (See appendix – B).

Data Collection and Analysis

The data obtained from the opened ended questionnaire filled by students was arranged according to the responses provided by them.

The second step was to analyzed data from the test taken by the students related to tenses. The researcher initially checked and underlined the sentences which contained errors related to tenses. The theoretical framework used in this research for

the analysis of errors was S.P. [Corder \(1981\)](#) Error Analysis Procedure. The Surface Structure Taxonomy of [Dulay, Burt, and Krashen \(1982\)](#) was used to categorize the various types of errors made by students in tests. Errors of omission, addition, misordering, and misinformation were all classified. The researcher also tried to describe possible causes or factors of errors that students made.

The quantitative data obtained from English language teachers regarding the types and causes of student's errors in tenses was analyzed by using SPS software.

Results and Discussion

The Result of Students' Responses

From the responses of students, the researcher found out that at the Bachelor level, students were still faced issues of present tenses and their correct recognition, and they are still confused in the correct usage of lexical and auxiliary verbs. Tenses were taught just through translation exercise without any creative writing. Students suggested that present teacher tenses through dialogue, discussions, short story, worksheets, and audio-video clips.

The Result of Teachers' Responses

The teachers strongly agreed with the fact that students make errors in the active and passive voice of present tenses due to cramming of rules, negligence and lack of practice on their own part. Teachers also suggested that present tenses should be taught inductively without any translation.

The Result of Test

The number of students was counted who made errors relate to omission, addition, misinformation and misordering in using present tenses.

Table 1. The Recapitulation of Error Types, Frequency of Students, and its Percentage

| Error's classification | No of students | Percentage |
|-------------------------|----------------|------------|
| Error of Omission | 252 / 330 | 76.36% |
| Error of Misinformation | 319 / 330 | 96.66% |
| Error of Addition | 65 / 330 | 19.69% |
| Error of Misordering | 135 / 330 | 40.90% |

This table gives a clear description of errors. The percentage of students who made errors of omission

and misinformation is higher as compared to errors of addition and misordering.

Errors Related to Present Perfect

The present perfect tense is formed by combining the present tense of have/has with the past participle. The following are examples of incorrect statements that students made regarding present perfect sentences:

- *Someone has stole my CD player.* (error of misinformation)
- *Has you ever see a grizzly bear?* (error of misinformation)
- *I have never try sky driving.* (error of misinformation)
- *He have work hard this week at his job.* (error of misinformation)
- *Bill have just buy a new house.* (error of misinformation)
- *The house have been painted green for ten years.* (error of misinformation)
- *The bus has broke down.* (error of misinformation)
- *Susan have eaten two pieces of cake.* (error of misinformation)
- *I have rode three kilometers to get to work.* (error of misinformation)

Passive Voice Errors in the Present Indefinite and Present Continuous

Some examples of incorrect sentence conversions from active to passive voice:

- *A picture is drawing by me.* (error of omission)
- *Is the thief caught by the police officer?* (error of omission)
- *You are not been helped by them.* (error of misinformation)
- *The letter not written by you.* (error of omission)
- *The door open by him.* (error of omission)

- *The letter is not write by you.* (error of misinformation)
- *A picture is draw by me.* (error of omission+ misinformation)
- *The letter did not wrote by you.* (error of misinformation)

Errors in the Present Perfect Continuous Tense

The present perfect is made up of the present participle + the present perfect of the verb **to be**. The following are some examples of incorrect sentences made by students using present perfect continuous.

- *The workers was demanding high wages for a long time.* (error of misinformation and omission)
- *I running on beach for thirty minutes.* (error of omission)
- *It were raining since yesterday.* (error of misinformation and omission)
- *He walk in the garden since morning.* (error of misinformation and omission)
- *I use this laptop for years.* (error of misinformation and omission)
- *The workers demands high wages for a long time.* (error of misinformation and omission)
- *The workers have demands high wages for a long time.* (error of misinformation and omission)
- *Who have been sleeping in my bed?* (error of misinformation)

It can be estimated from the above errors made by students in using present tenses that most of the students put incorrect lexical and auxiliary verbs. Errors of addition and misordering were low as compared to omission and misinformation. Students were confused about the correct helping verb in simple, progressive and perfect aspects.

Table 2. Error Description Following is the Detailed Description of some more Erroneous Statements that Students made using Present Tenses

| The data of error | Reconstruction | Basic grammar term description | Surface structure description |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Do the blue shoes are weared by them? | Are blue shoes worn by them | Auxiliary and irregular verb | misinformation |
| Bill have just bought a new house | Bill has just bought a new house | Subject-verb agreement | Misinformation |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Does the thief caught by the police officer | Is the thief caught by the police officer | Auxiliary and irregular verb | misinformation | |
| Did blue shoes wear by them | Are blue shoes worn by them | Auxiliary and irregular verb | misinformation | |
| The letter did not written by you | The letter is not written by you | Auxiliary verb | misinformation | |
| The bus has broke down | The bus has broken down | Auxiliary verb | misinformation | |
| I have rode three kilometer to get to work | I have ridden three kilometers to get to work | Irregular verb | misinformation | |
| It raining since yesterday | It has been raining since yesterday | Auxiliary verb | omission | |
| The workers demanding high wages for a long time | The workers have been demanding high wages for a long time | Auxiliary verbs | omission | |
| How long you waiting for him | How long have you been waiting for him | Auxiliary verb | omission | |
| Bill has just buy a new house | Bill has just bought a new house | Irregular verb | misinformation | |
| Someone have stolen my CD player | Someone has stolen by CD player | Subject-verb agreement | misinformation | |
| The girl has learning her lessons | The girl has been learning her lessons | Auxiliary verb | omission | |
| He has work hard this week at his job | He has worked hard this week at his job | Regular verb | misinformation | |
| That house have been painted green for ten years | The house has been painted green for ten years | Subject-verb agreement | misinformation | |
| Is the thief is caught by the police officer | Is the thief being caught by the police officer | Auxiliary and irregular verb | Addition misinformation | + |
| The book does not opened by him | The book is not opened by him | Auxiliary verb | misinformation | |
| How long you waiting for? | How long have you been waiting for? | Auxiliary verbs | omission | |
| I have run on beach for thirty minutes. | I have been running on beach for thirty minutes | Auxiliary verb + present participle | Omission misinformation | + |
| Who sleeping in my bed? | Who has been sleeping in my bed | Auxiliary verbs | omission | |
| Her payed a lot of money | A lot of money is paid by her | Auxiliary verb | Omission misordering | + |
| Do they wear have blue shoes | Do they wear blue shoes | Auxiliary verb | addition | |
| He working in the garden since morning. | He has been working in the garden since morning | Auxiliary verbs | omission | |
| A letter did not written by you | A letter is not written by you | Auxiliary verb | Misinformation | |
| The book did not opened by him | The book is not opened by him | Auxiliary verb | Misinformation | |
| How long you waiting for | How long have you been waiting for | Auxiliary verb | Misinformation | |
| Do not opened the book by him | The book is not opened by him | Auxiliary verb | Misinformation misordering | + |
| Catching the thief is the police officer | Is the thief caught by the police officer | Auxiliary and lexical verbs | Misinformation misordering | + |
| Write the letter doesn't you | The letter is not written by you | Auxiliary and lexical verbs | Misinformation misordering | + |
| Wear the blue shoes by them? | Are blue shoes worn by them | Auxiliary and lexical verbs | Misinformation and omission | and |
| You was not helped by them | You are not helped by them | Auxiliary verb | misinformation | |

| | | | |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Someone has stole my CD player | Someone has stolen my CD player | Irregular verb | misinformation |
| Someone have stolen my CD player | Someone has stolen my CD player | Subject- verb agreement | misinformation |
| Bill have just buy a new house | Bill has just bought a new house | Subject- verb agreement | misinformation |
| The house has be painted green for ten years | The house has been painted for ten years | Auxiliary verb | misinformation |
| The bus has broke. | The bus has broken... | Irregular verb | misinformation |
| The bus have broke down | The bus has broken down | Subject- verb agreement + lexical verb | misinformation |
| Susan has ate two pieces of cake. | Susan has eaten two pieces of cake | Irregular verb | misinformation |
| Susan have ate. | Susan has eaten | Subject- verb agreement + lexical verb | misinformation |
| Susan have eaten two pieces of cake | Susan has eaten two pieces of cake | Subject-verb agreement | misinformation |
| We have sail on the... | We have sailed on the. | Regular verb | Misinformation |
| We has sailed on the. | We have sailed on the. | Subject-verb agreement | misinformation |
| We has sail on the Glenmore reservoir. | We have sailed on the Glenmore reservoir | Subject- verb agreement + lexical verb | misinformation |

The researcher's goal was to gather general information about the difficulties that students face when learning and writing in the present tense.

Although students learn present tenses and teachers teach them from primary to intermediate, it was clear from the majority of teacher responses that students do not have command of the present tenses and make grammatical errors in their writings. The errors of students were analyzed using Krashen's Surface structure taxonomy (1982), and statistical analysis showed that the greater percentage of errors was related to errors of omission and misinformation. Students made less addition and misordering mistakes. Auxiliary verbs, past participles, present participles, pronouns, subjects, subject-verb agreement, and other omissions and misinformation were discovered.

Students, according to teachers, cram the rules of present tenses, which are primarily taught to them through the grammar translation method in school and college. Most of the time, students find it difficult to change from active to passive voice in the present tense. Teachers agreed that students are not properly taught the use and function of present tenses, particularly in public schools and colleges compared to private schools and colleges. Teachers agreed that the translation method hindered students' writing

skills and did not prepare them for written and spoken communication skills, resulting in students' inability to construct correct grammatical sentences. Teachers must favor teaching present tenses inductively rather than through translation so that students could gain a better understanding of the rules and structure of English.

Teachers should use different activities rather than textbooks to improve students' writing skills, such as worksheets, and should encourage students to participate in English speeches and extracurricular activities related to the English language. Teachers should experiment with new and interesting ways to teach tenses (for example, through real-life examples, charts, activities, assignments, picture descriptions, tests, and presentations), as well as allowing students to improve their creative skills.

After the calculations of errors in present tenses it can be observed that students fail to use the fully developed structure and that is why they did not apply the correct rules related to auxiliary and lexical verbs and made errors of omission and misinformation. Students had the knowledge of the rules but could not understand the rules completely. Usually when learners do not understand the exception to the general rule; are bound to commit errors. They ignored the rules related to correct

grammatical sentences.

The present tenses were not well understood by the students. As a result, when they were asked to identify the tenses, they revealed their incorrect present-tense concepts and made incorrect identifications. The concepts of present perfect continuous and present continuous were mixed up. It's possible that they didn't understand the present tenses because their teachers didn't explain it to them or didn't understand it themselves. Such errors cannot be overlooked at the college level.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to provide information about the difficulties that students face when learning present tenses, as well as to make recommendations for avoiding common mistakes and errors that arise during the teaching and learning process. A good language teacher is one who can recognize the problems that students are having and offer solutions to help them solve them. Errors will always be made, according to Brighton (1994) (cited in Cakir, 2011), and have direct implications for corrective work because they are by their very nature systematic violations of the language's standard rules.

The study discovered that the most common omission and misinformation errors occurred when sentences were converted from active to passive voice. 76% students made errors of omission, 96 % students made errors of misinformation, only 19% students committed errors of addition and 40% students made errors of misordering in using auxiliary verbs. The students found the task of identifying the tense name and indicating whether it was in active or passive voice to be the most difficult. It was discovered that students, even at the BS level, do not have a strong grasp of the present tense. When

discussing student errors, the possible causes were also discussed. They have never been able to grasp the structure of present tenses properly, and instead of understanding the proper meaning of a sentence, they simply identify it by noticing the auxiliary and lexical verbs and make errors.

Recommendations

- To reduce students' present-tense errors, the researcher recommends that teachers use a direct or indirect method to correct their errors.
- English language teachers should teach not only the form but also the function of grammar, particularly tenses. As a result, the teacher should provide enough drills to the students that emphasize both the form and the use of tense. It means that the student should be able to apply or use tense in communication after learning it. Writing a short composition is one type of drill that has been suggested. Teachers should contribute more to problematic areas.
- In addition, teachers must be creative when developing teaching materials. They can employ a variety of methods or approaches to teach English and solve students' problems, allowing them to better comprehend the various types of present tenses in both active and passive voice. Students should write in a creative manner, using proper grammar and tenses, and there should be more activities than those provided in textbooks.
- Another study should be conducted to look into the difficulties that students had in using other English tenses (past and future tenses) in their English writings.

References

- Brown, H. D. (1987). Principles of language learning and teaching. New Jersey: Pentice-Hall.
- Çakır, I. (2011). Problems in teaching tenses to Turkish learners. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 1(2), 123-127.
- Corder, S. P. (1981). Error analysis and interlanguage. *Oxford University Press, USA*.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. *Sage publications*.
- Dulay, H., Burt, M., & Krashen, S. (1982). Language two. Oxford, England: *Oxford University Press*.
- Jabbari, M. J. (2013). Time and tense in language. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 5(5), 243.
- Morgan, D. L. (2007). Paradigms lost and pragmatism regained: Methodological implications of combining qualitative and quantitative methods. *Journal of mixed methods research*, 1(1), 48-76.
- Muhsin, M. A. (2016). Analyzing the students errors in using simple present (A case study at Junior High School in Makassar). *Pacific Science Review B: Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(3), 81-87.
- Richards, J. C. (1974). A non-contrastive approach to error analysis. *Error analysis: Perspectives on second language acquisition*, 172-188.
- Sukasame, N., Kantho, S., & Narrot, P. (2014). A study of errors in learning english grammatical structures on tenses of Matthayomsuksa 4 students of the demonstration school, Khonkaen University. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 116, 1934-1939.