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Errors in Simple Present Tense Commonly Committed by Students of UNIVET

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A B S T R A C T

English is considered important to learn because of its influence. However in Indonesia, English is categorized as a foreign language. The differences between English and Bahasa Indonesia make error unavoidable. This research is conducted to know which type of errors that most of the students make in using simple present tense and the factors why the students find learning simple present tense difficult. In conducting this research, mixed method was used to collect data from 18 students in the fourth semester of Veteran University. The data was collected from the result of the test and questionnaire given which will be used to answer the research question related. The findings of this research are there are 63% errors of misformation which most of the students make in using simple present tense and the lack of awareness which takes a great role in making simple present tense is difficult to learn. Thus from the results, we can conclude that the students mostly made misformation error and need to be aware regarding the importance of English.

Keywords: simple present tense, error

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INTRODUCTION

Language is important in the world. "Language is a means of communication that is used to transfer information, ideas, and feelings from one person to another" (Kurniati, 2017, p. 227). Without language, it will be hard for us to communicate with each other. And that is why language is really important for us. Since there are many languages out there, no doubts that we will find some languages are pretty similar with ours or even completely different. In our country, English is considered as a foreign language, thus we may find it hard to learn since there are many differences with our language. But remembering the influence of the language, English is still considered important, thus it is taught both in formal or informal school.

Focusing in formal school, even if English has been taught since Elementary school, but not many who can understand the rules of this language. Of course, the rules here mean grammar. Grammar is like a foundation of the building. Without the foundation, the building cannot stand still. "Grammar is about form and one way to teach form is to give students rules" (Karagul & Yuksel, 2014, p. 251). If we create sentence without considering the grammar, it is possible that that sentence will be conveyed differently than what we

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intend to say. That is why, it is necessary to correct our grammar first before we can master in English.

In learning grammar, tenses play the important role. There are 16 tenses in total which we need to learn. But this time the writer wants to especially focus in simple present tense. According to Azar (Azar, 1998, p. 13), "simple present tense is used to express habitual or everyday activities". Simple present tense is a tense which cannot be separated from our daily conversation. Swan (Swan, 2005) stated that there are some functions of simple present tense. The first is function is stories. Present tenses are often used informally to tell stories. The simple present is used for the events – the things that happen one after another. Example: *So I open the door, and I look out into the garden, and I see this man.* Second is for commentaries. In here, the simple present is used for the quicker actions and events (which are finished before the sentences that describe them). Example: *Harris passes back to Simms, nice ball – and Simms shoots!* And the last function is for giving instructions and demonstrations. In giving instructions, demonstrations, and directions, we often use present tenses. Example: *First I put a lump of butter into a frying pan and light the gas; then while the butter's melting I break three eggs into a bowl.*

Simple present tense has 3 structures as follow:

Table 1. Structures of simple present tense

Positive	Negative	Interrogative
Subject + infinitive (V1) + s/es	Subject + do/does + not + infinitive (V1)	Do/does + subject + infinitive (V1)?

According to the table above, the using of suffix "-s" depends on the subject itself. Usually, plural subjects (nouns) do not use suffix "-s" for example; "you", "we", and "they". However, it does not mean that all of singular subjects (nouns) automatically use suffix "-s". Suffix "-s" will only be used for singular subjects (nouns) "he", "she", and "it" as we can see in the table below.

Table 2. The using of suffix "-s"

	Singular	Plural
First person	I do	We do
Second person	You do	You do
Third person	He does	They do
	She does	They do
	It does	They do

Simple present tense also uses "to be" which will act as a verb. "To be" can be divided into "is", "am", and "are". Usually, plural subjects (nouns) use "are" as "to be". Singular subject (noun) "I" use "am", and "he", "she", and "it" use "is" as "to be" as we can see in the table below.

Table 3. The using of "to be"

	Singular	Plural
First person	I am	We are
Second person	You are	You are
Third person	He is	They are
	She is	They are
	It is	They are

As an addition, you may use modal in simple present tense. Modal can be divided into "can", "may", "will", etc which will be used in present tense and "could", "might", "would", etc which will be used in past tense. In using modal in simple present tense, verb does not followed by suffix "-s". As a result, the verb will not change and will still be infinitive (V1) as we can see in the table below.

Table 4. The using of modal

Present tense	Past tense
Will	Would
Shall	Should
Can	Could
May	Might
Must	Had to

Sometimes, error may occur when using simple present tense. James (James, 2013, p. 83) stated that "errors cannot be self-corrected until further relevant (to that error) input (implicit or explicit) has been provided and converted into intake by learner". In other words, error is the mistake made with the lack of knowledge and cannot be corrected unless the students have an understanding. Errors which the students made can be included as 'common' errors. A common error is an error which are made by the learners frequently (Turton, 1995). Error analysis method is an effective way to study the students' errors and a good tool in describing and classifying errors is surface strategy taxonomy (Abdullah, 2013). Bialystok et al. (Bialystok et al., 1983) classify the types of error called surface strategy taxonomy. Surface strategy taxonomy highlights the way surface structures are altered. Surface strategy taxonomy is classified error as follows:

Omission

Omission error happens when there is an absence of an item that must exist in a well-formed utterance. Example: *Luna <u>drive</u> a car to school every day*.

Additions

Addition error is the opposite of omissions. It happens when there is an addition of an item that must not exist in a well-formed utterance. There are 3 types of addition error:

Double markings happen when an addition of verb exists in a well-formed utterance. Example: *She <u>didn't felt</u> well*.

Regularization is an exception of a rule that is made to a class of linguistic items.

Simple addition is categorized if the addition error is neither included as double markings nor regularization. Example: *<u>The students</u> in a uniform <u>stands</u> in front of the class*.

Misformation

Misformation error is categorized when the use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure happens. Example: *The cat eated the fish.*

Misordering

Misordering error happens when the placement of a morpheme or group of morphemes in an utterance is incorrect. Example: *Tio drinks sometimes coffee.*

After we understand about the type of errors, the next step is to analyze it. Error analysis is a study where the focus or the object of the analysis is the error which the learner's makes. According to Drachsler & Kirschner (Drachsler & Kirschner, 2012) error analysis is a study where the error of the learner can be observed, analyzed, and classified to show the system operating within the learner. Barkhuizen (Barkhuizen, 2015) explained that there are 5 (five) steps in conducting an error analysis following Corder (1974), namely collecting a sample of learner language, identification of errors, description of errors, explanation of errors, and errors evaluation.

From the explanation above, we can see that it is really important to master this tense. The importance of this tense makes the writer taking an interest to bring up this material as the object of the research. Based on the experience, the writer could say that in formal school (from Elementary School until Senior High School) the teacher did not give further explanation about tenses, especially simple present tense. The teacher just asked the students to write the structures of the tenses and memorize it. The writer also asked one of the respondents and found that students in Veteran University (UNIVET) experienced many problems in learning it. They were not really interested in learning English and sometimes made some errors in using simple present tense. Moreover, they seldom used English in their daily lives except in a class which made them immediately forgetting what they had already learned about. The teacher also asked the students to copy the material written on the whiteboard and did not elaborate the material clearly. This case made the writer thinks that the quality of English teaching is a bit low. Thus, the writer wanted to know whether the students can follow this type of teaching by looking from the results of the test given to assess the knowledge of the students regarding simple present tense by focusing on the errors which they make in using simple present tense and the reason why they find this tense is hard to learn.

METHOD

Method plays the important part in completing this study. In conducting this research, the writer chose mixed method. According to Marvasti (Marvasti, 2018) mixed method is a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative method and is used to collect numerical and narrative data. The numerical data is got from the test which will be processed into percentage and narrative data which is got from the questionnaire will be processed into description text. The research design which the writer chose was explanatory sequential design.

Respondents

The respondents of this research were from fourth semester students of Veteran University (UNIVET). The writer focused on a class contained 18 students which majoring in digital business. The writer chose these students as respondents, because the writer wanted to test the ability of the students who are not majoring in English but still relate a bit with English.

Instruments

Research instruments are tools which will be used in collecting data. In collecting data, the writer gave a test about simple present tense which consists of 15 questions; 7 multiple choice questions, 7 fill in blank questions, and write a 3 – 5 sentences of description text. This test is compiled to answer the first objective of this research which is to understand the type of errors that most of the students make in learning simple present tense. By using the test,

the writer can conclude what type of errors which most of the students wrote in answering those questions. The writer also gave a questionnaire to answer the second objective of this research which is to understand the reason why students find simple present difficult to learn. The questionnaire contained about some questions regarding the factor why students find simple present tense difficult to learn.

Procedures

In collecting the data, first, the writer chose the respondents. After choosing the respondents, the writer compiled some questions given to the respondents as a test and questionnaire. The respondents were given some days to answer and submit both the test and questionnaire. Last, the test and questionnaire were processed and analyzed.

Data analysis

In analyzing the data, the writer needs to analyze both from the quantitative and qualitative research data. Explanatory sequential design is done by collecting quantitative data which afterwards will be followed up with qualitative data to make an interpretation (Small, 1995).
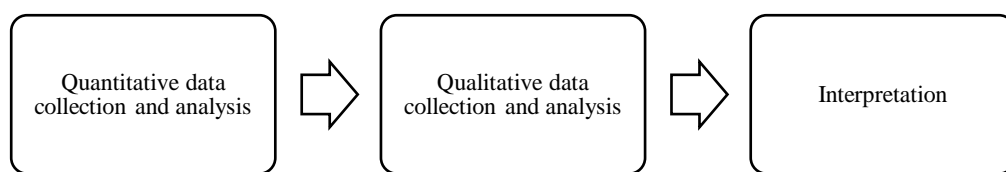

Figure 1. Explanatory sequential design

The quantitative data was analyzed by making the graphic or chart of each number of questions written in a test. Then, from that graphic or chart, the conclusion was drawn which the types of error the students make in answering the question.

The qualitative data was analyzed by indentifying the answer of the questionnaire which will be drawn into conclusion about the reason why students find simple present tense is difficult to learn.

Both of these data answered the first research question which is to know the type of errors that most of the students make in using simple present tense and the second research question which is to know the factors why the students find learning simple present tense difficult.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data that the writer collected came from the students' sides since this research focused only on the students' errors in using simple present tense, their understandings, and the factors why they find learning simple present tense is difficult. After collecting the data, the writer analyzed the quantitative data using table to make it easier to present the result. The quantitative and qualitative data are presented into charts to answer 2 research questions which the writer made. The first research question is purposed to know which type of errors that most of the students made in using simple present tense. The types of errors were categorized using surface strategy taxonomy which are classified into omission, additions, misformation, and misordering (Bialystok et al., 1983). This research question was answered based from the result of the test which the writer gave. The second research question is purposed to know the factors why the students find learning simple present tense difficult. These factors are categorized into internal factor which comes from the person himself and the external factor which comes from the environment. This research question was answered based from the result of the questionnaire given.

Type of errors that most of the students made in using simple present tense

To answer this research question, the writer compiled 15 questions which consists of 7 multiple choice questions, 7 fill in blank questions, and a short description text contained 3 – 5 sentences. The result can be seen in the table below.

Table 5. Results of the test

Question Number	Surface Strategy Taxonomy			
	Omission	Additions	Misformation	Misordering
1	0	0	9	0
2	0	8	2	0
3	2	0	11	0
4	2	0	13	0
5	0	0	0	0
6	0	3	3	0
7	0	0	2	0
8	4	0	4	0
9	3	0	3	0
10	0	8	6	0
11	3	0	12	0
12	0	3	5	0
13	1	5	4	0
14	2	0	9	0
15	8	0	6	0
Total	**25**	**27**	**89**	**0**

By analyzing the test, the writer got the result that the total errors which the students made are 141 errors. These errors are classified into 25 errors of omission, 27 errors of additions, and 89 errors of misformation. From the table above, it will be easier to understand if we make the data into percentage. If we calculate it, the data will be shown as the chart below.
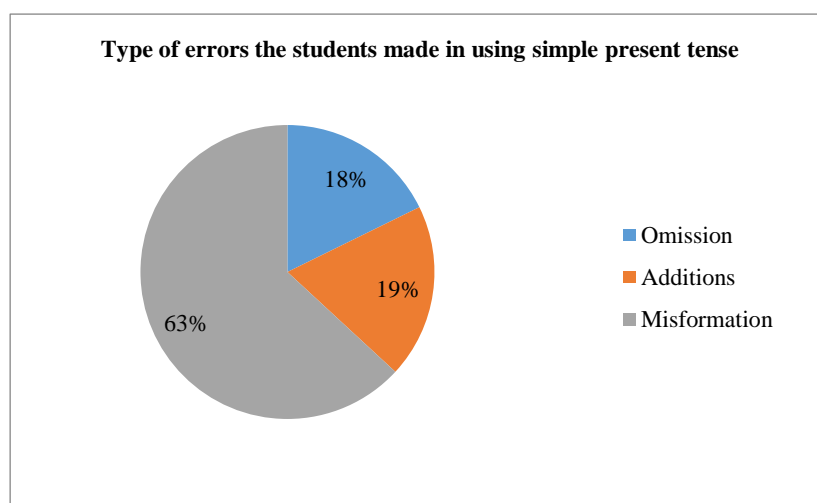

Figure 2. Percentage of type of errors the students made

The figure shows that 63% errors which most of the students made in using simple present tense are misformation. The second type of error which the students made is additions which show the percentage of 19. The remaining errors are omission with a

number of 18%. There is no misordering error since the students follow the order of the structure correctly.

The factors why the students find learning simple present tense difficult

To answer this research question, the writer made a questionnaire regarding the students' difficulties in using simple present tense, their understandings in simple present tense, and the factors why they find learning simple present tense difficult. By analyzing the questionnaire, the writer got the result that the difficulties in simple present mainly occur because it is hard to learn and memorize the structure. In addition the lack of vocabularies makes it harder to differentiate between simple present tense and the other tenses.
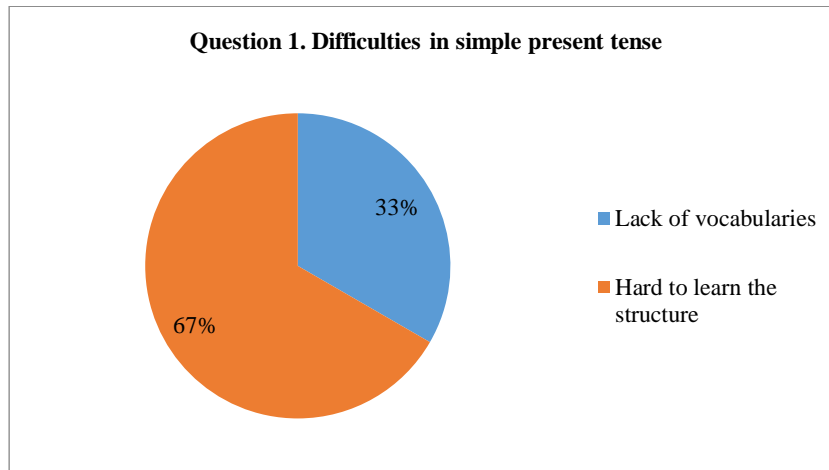

Figure 3. Results of number 1 questionnaire

The students also stated that most of them did not really understand the use of simple present tense. There are just 25% of them who have been taught and understand about the use of simple present tense, 35% who have been taught and understand just a bit of simple present tense, 15% who have been taught, understood, but then forget about the use of simple present tense, and 25% who have been taught but do not even understand about simple present tense.
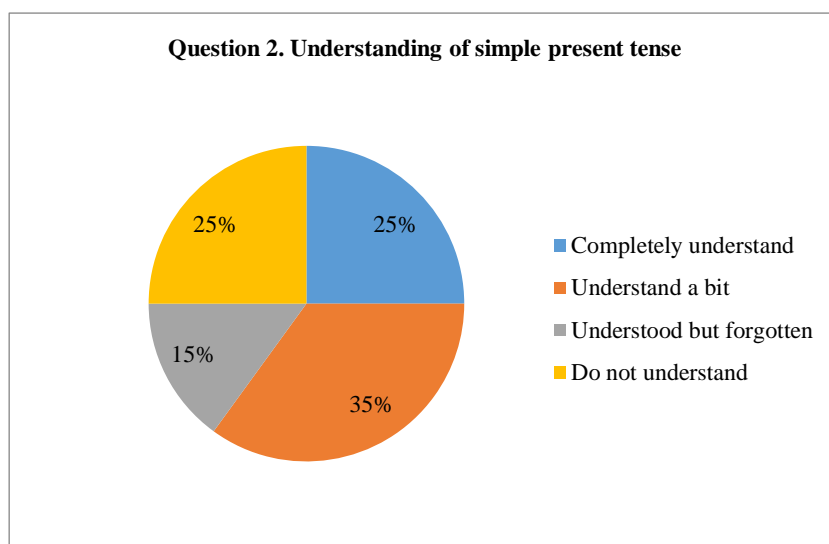

Figure 4. Results of number 2 questionnaire

Students explained that the factor why learning simple present tense is difficult mostly came from the internal factor with a number of 50%. This internal factor mainly is about their

lack of awareness regarding the importance of English, also their difficulties in memorizing the structure of simple present tense and their lack of vocabularies. The remaining 50% were from the external factor with a classification; the environment which does not support the students in using English publicly was 33%, the differences in structure between English and Bahasa Indonesia was 11%, and the way of the teacher teaches simple present in class was 6%.
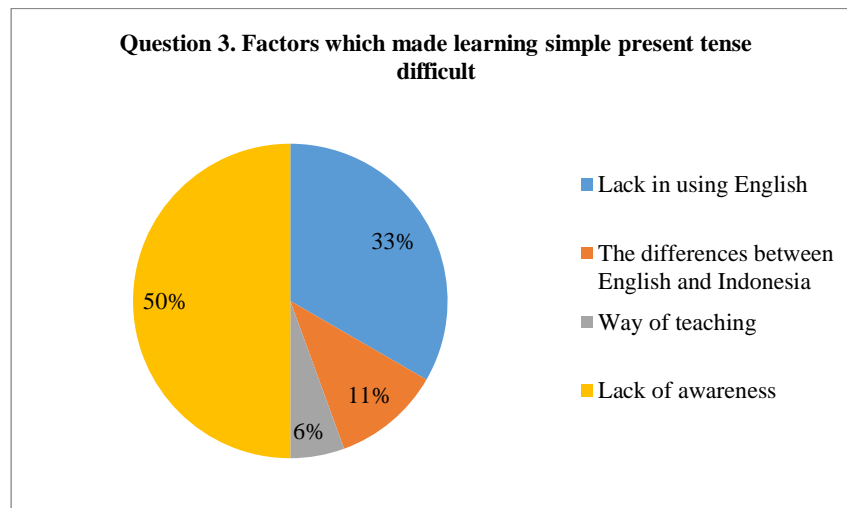

Figure 5. Results of number 3 questionnaire

The findings above, both from the quantitative data (test) and qualitative data (questionnaire) will be discussed further as follows:

Type of errors that most of the students made in using simple present tense

According to Abdullah (Abdullah, 2013) error analysis method is an effective way to study the students' errors. He added that the surface strategy taxonomy is a good tool in the process of describing and classifying errors. That is why, in classifying the errors of the test results, the writer chose surface strategy taxonomy. Surface strategy taxonomy classifies errors into four types, namely omission, additions, misformation, and misordering (Bialystok et al., 1983).

From the figure, most of the students made 68% misformation errors in using simple present tense. These errors happen because of the wrong form the students made. There are 3 types of misformation error, but the one that the students made is archi-forms. Archi-forms happen when there is a substitution of a member of a class of forms. For example:

"… *the meeting take place in your office?*"

The correct answer of this question is "does", but most of the students answer "is". In this case, the students substitute "does" as "is". Thus, this kind of error is classified into misformation archi-forms error.

Students also made about 19% errors of additions. This error happens when there is an addition of an item that must not exist. There are 3 types of addition error and the students made 2 types of it which are simple addition and double markings. Simple addition happen if the addition is neither categorized as double markings nor regularization. For example:

"*She can … fresh vegetables in the market.*" (get)

The correct answer of this question is "get" since there is a modal "can" in the sentence above, but most of the students answer "gets". In this case, there is an addition of suffix "-s" that must not exist. Thus, this kind of error is classified into simple addition error. While students made simple addition error, they also made double markings error. Double marking happen when there is an addition of verb. For example:

A: "…"

B: "*Yes, he exercises every morning.*"

The correct answer of this question is "does he exercise every morning?", but there are students who answer "does he exercises every morning?" In this case, there is an addition of verb. The word "exercises" come from the word "does" + "exercise" and if we make it into a sentence will be "he <u>does exercise</u> every morning". So, if we make this sentence to an interrogative, the order of the sentence will change into "<u>does</u> he <u>exercise</u> every morning?" Thus, this kind of error is classified into addition double markings error.

There are 18% of omission errors that the students made in using simple present tense. This error happens when there is an absence of an item that must exist. For example:

"The sun … in the east." (rise)

The correct answer of this question is "rises", but there are students who answer "rise". In this case, there is an absence of suffix "-s" which follow the verb "rise" since the subject is categorized as "it". Thus, this kind of error is classified into omission error.

Therefore, the first research question about which types of errors do most of the students make in learning simple present tense was answered, that is misformation error with 68%. The results of this research is in line with the research result done by Siswoyo (Siswoyo, 2016) which stated that the most error made by the students is misformation error with 96.71%.

The factors why the students find learning simple present tense is difficult

From the findings, we see that in learning tenses, the students have a hard time in memorizing each of the structure of tenses. English has 16 tenses and each of them have different structures. In this way, not only memorize the structure, the students are required to understand how to use each tenses based from the situation. It is the opposite of Bahasa Indonesia which only have 1 structure to explain all of the situations happen. Moreover, the lack of vocabularies adds their difficulties since they do not know what is discussed or what information conveyed from the sentence. The teacher also does not provide any further explanation of tenses. As a result, they sometimes mix up the tenses. For example, the sentence requires the students to answer in simple present tense. Since they do not know the structure of simple present tense and lack in vocabularies, they may answer the sentence in present continuous tense or even simple past tense.

About 25% of the students stated that they have been taught and understand the use of simple present tense, 35% students have been taught and understand just a little bit of it, 15% have been taught, understood, but then forget the using of simple present tense, and 25% have been taught but do not understand. This result is in line with the research result by Andriani (Andriani, 2019) which showed that 22% of the students could understand simple present tense, meanwhile 78% of the students could not understand simple present tense. The understanding of the students in simple present tense is really low. This happen because of the reason addressed above. Hard in memorizing the structure and lack of vocabularies are categorized as internal factor. Not only that, lack in awareness also included as internal factor.

There are 2 factors why the students find learning simple present tense difficult. The first factor is internal factor. This factor happens because of the person itself. Hard in memorizing and lack of vocabularies are indeed come from the person itself. It means that the person can countermeasure against his shortcoming. In order to do that, students need to have awareness. From the data above, around 50% of the students lack in awareness regarding the importance of English. They tend to think that the English they learned in the school will not be used again and it makes them underestimate the importance of English. Most of them think that as long as they can make a sentence and the person they converse with understand about it, grammar is not really important. This makes students do not think that correcting their mistakes in using grammar is necessary. Whereas, the error and mistake in using grammar can define the different meaning from what we intend to say.

This case is supported by the way of the teacher teaches them. There is a phrase that the teacher said, "English is about confidence." This phrase confirms indirectly that it is okay to not understand grammar and make a mistake. When practising English, the teacher also

does not take the initiative to correct the students' mistakes. This affected the students to not correct their mistakes or errors and not learn grammar properly. In teaching English, the teacher just asks the students to copy from the whiteboard and does not provide any further explanation, for example the condition to use the tense. This situation is supported by the research result by Andriani (Andriani, 2019) which explained that in her observation, she found that the teacher taught simple present tense by giving a note on the whiteboard, gave some examples, and then asked the students to take a note. After that, the students were only given limited time to do some exercise. This case forces the students to memorize the structure of tenses, but does not give them the chance to understand the using of it. Between memorizing and understanding, most people get their knowledge because of the act of understanding. Take mathematics as an example, we know how to count money not because we memorize the way to count it, but because we understand the concept in counting money which includes addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Thus, teacher has a great role to build the students' interest in learning and make the students understand the material and not memorize it.

Other than the way of teaching, environment takes a part as external factor in making the students have difficulties in learning simple present tense. The environment here talks about the lack in using English publicly. English needs to be used daily in order to support our skill in using it. When we were a baby, our parents taught us talking in Bahasa Indonesia. In learning Bahasa Indonesia, we were not taught just once or twice per week, but we were taught every single day. First, we babbled a word. That word might not pronounce correctly, but we still tried to pronounce it day by day. After we babbled words, we started to make simple sentence and that kept going on and was progressing until on some points we eventually master Bahasa Indonesia. That exact environment is the kind of environment which we need in learning English. We need to make the situation where we are forced to use English every single day. By making that kind of environment, we can also master English, moreover simple present tense, in no time.

Both internal and external factors actually related to each other. In having the awareness regarding the importance of English, the support from the environment is needed in making the students have the willingness in studying English more and also from the teacher in making the students have an interest to understand English. At the same time, in creating the environment where English is used publicly, the commitment and willingness of the students are needed.

CONCLUSIONS

The type of errors that most of the students make in using simple present tense is misformation with the calculation of 63%. This error occurs because of the low understanding of the students in using simple present. This result answered the first research question which is to to know the type of errors that most of the students make in using simple present tense. There are two factors which make the students have difficulties in learning this tense which answered the second research question which is to know the factors why the students find learning simple present tense difficult. The internal factor comes from the lack of awareness of the students regarding the importance of English which make them thinking that correcting their mistakes and errors in using simple present tense is unnecessary. The external factor why the students find learning English difficult, comes from the environment which does not support the students in using English publicly.

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