



The Correlation between Students' Mastery of Simple Past Tense and Their Ability in Translating Recount Text at the First Year of SMA Muhammadiyah Rambah

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Abstract. *This research investigates the correlation between students' mastery of simple past tense and their ability in translating recount texts at the first year of SMA Muhammadiyah Rambah. The research was motivated by the fact that many students struggle to use past verb forms, particularly irregular verbs, which are essential in recount texts. Translation is not only about word substitution but also requires grammatical accuracy, especially in understanding tenses. This research employed a quantitative approach with a correlational design. The population consisted of 29 tenth-grade students, who were also used as the total sample. Data were collected using two instruments there are a 25-item multiple-choice test to measure students' mastery of the simple past tense, and a translation essay of a recount text to evaluate their translation ability. The data were analyzed using Pearson's product-moment correlation after passing validity, reliability, normality, and linearity tests. The findings showed a significant and very strong positive correlation between the two variables, with a correlation coefficient of 0.868 and a significance value of $0.000 < 0.05$. This result indicates that students with better mastery of the simple past tense tend to achieve higher performance in translating recount texts. The findings also suggest that grammar, particularly tense mastery, is best learned when combined with practical activities such as translation rather than being taught in isolation. Teachers are encouraged to design learning strategies that integrate tense instruction with translation practice to strengthen students' grammatical and translation abilities.*

Keywords: Instruments; Recount text; SMA Muhammadiyah Rambah; Simple past tense; Translating.

1. BACKGROUND

Learning English has become a fundamental necessity in the globalization era, not only as an academic subject but also as a skill that determines intellectual development and future career opportunities (Aimen & Khadim, 2024). In English language learning, translation ability is one of the essential skills students must acquire, yet it is considered complex since it requires mastery of grammar as well as meaning transfer across languages (Cheng, 2022; Zhang, 2021). One of the critical grammatical aspects that influences translation accuracy is tense mastery, particularly the simple past tense, which is a dominant feature of recount texts (Faizah, 2024; Rosalinah et al., 2020).

Previous studies (Masriani & Selle, 2018; Musbar & Tambunan, 2023) confirmed that tense mastery positively correlates with students' translation skills. However, little attention has been given to the relationship between mastery of the simple past tense and translation of recount texts, which are central in the senior high school curriculum. Observations at SMA Muhammadiyah Rambah revealed that many students struggled with verb changes in the simple past tense and relied heavily on dictionaries when translating recount texts. This gap

underlines the need to explore whether students' mastery of the simple past tense significantly affects their translation ability.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine whether there is a correlation between students' mastery of the simple past tense and their ability in translating recount texts at the first year of SMA Muhammadiyah Rambah or not.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Simple past tense is one of the basic verb forms in English used to describe events, activities, or circumstances that occurred and ended at a specific time in the past (Jiang & Hyland, 2023). Rahma et al. (2024) state that the simple past tense refers to events that occurred at a specific moment, actions that have been completed, and past habits. Mastery of the simple past tense includes understanding the patterns of sentence formation in positive, negative, and interrogative forms, as well as the correct use of verb forms according to their type, whether regular verbs or irregular verbs (Fitria, 2021).

Translation is the process of transferring words or phrases between languages without losing their original meaning. Nida A (2001) explains that translation is not merely an exchange of words in two different languages, but rather an important act of conveying the intended message from the original text to the target language as naturally and accurately as possible. The quality of a translation can be assessed through three aspects: accuracy, acceptability, and readability (Nababan et al., 2012). These three aspects determine the extent to which the translation successfully conveys the original message.

A recount text is a type of text that recounts past experiences or events chronologically with the aim of informing or entertaining readers (Simanjuntak, 2020). The generic structure of a recount text includes orientation (introduction), events (series of events), and reorientation (optional conclusion). The main linguistic feature of a recount text is the consistent use of the simple past tense, as this text is essentially intended to recount experiences that have occurred in the past (Alhamidi et al., 2024).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a quantitative correlational design (Creswell, 2012) to examine the relationship between students' mastery of simple past tense (X) and their ability in translating recount text (Y). The population includes all 29 tenth-grade students at SMA Muhammadiyah Rambah, all selected through total sampling. Data collection employed two instruments: (1) a 25-item multiple-choice test to measure mastery of the simple past tense adapted from (Fitriah,

2022; Sari, 2022), and (2) a translation essay of a recount text titled “Visiting Bali” Adopted from (Simanjuntak, 2020). The translation quality was assessed using Machali’s (2009) rubric. Data analysis involved validity and reliability testing, descriptive statistics, normality test (Shapiro-Wilk), linearity test, and hypothesis testing using Pearson’s product-moment correlation with SPSS 27.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Descriptive Statistic

The descriptive analysis of students' mastery of simple past tense.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of students' mastery of simple past tense.

Descriptive Statistic												
Nilai Simple Past Tense	N		Mean	Std. Error of Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Devi ation	Var	Range	Min	Max	Su m
	Valid	Missing										
	29	0	74,07	3,337	76,00	56	17,972	322,995	56	44	100	2148

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of students' ability in translating recount text.

Descriptive Statistic												
Nilai Translati on Essay	N		Mea n	Std. Erro r of Mea n	Media n	Mod e	Std. Deviati on	Varian ce	Rang e	Min	Max	Su m
	Vali d	Missi ng										
	29	0	76,2 8	1,80 0	77,00	85	9,695	93,993	35	55	90	221 2

The results showed that the average score of students' mastery of the simple past tense was 74.07, while their average score in translating recount texts was 76.28. these findings indicate that student's mastery of simple past tense was generally good, whereas their translating ability remained in the good category.

Normality and Linearity Tests

Before correlation analysis, the assumptions of normality and linearity were tested.

Table 3. Normality Test (Shapiro-Wilk).

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
X	0,126	29	.200*	0,932	29	0,063
Y	0,137	29	0,172	0,936	29	0,077

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Since both significance values are greater than 0.05, the data are normally distributed.

Table 4. Linearity Test

ANOVA Table							
			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Translation * Mastery of simple past tense	Between Groups	(Combined)	2336,043	14	166,860	7,899	0,000
		Linearity	1983,558	1	1983,558	93,896	0,000
		Deviation from Linearity	352,485	13	27,114	1,284	0,324
	Within Groups		295,750	14	21,125		
	Total		2631,793	28			

The significance value of 0.342 (>0.05) indicates a linear relationship between the two variables.

Correlations Analysis

Table 5. Pearson Correlation Analysis.

Correlations			
		Mastery of Simple Past Tense (X)	Translating Recount Text (Y)
Mastery of Simple Past Tense (X)	Pearson Correlation	1	.868**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0,000
	N	29	29
Translating Recount Texts (Y)	Pearson Correlation	.868**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	
	N	29	29

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation coefficient was $r = 0.868$ with a significant value 0.000. indicates a strong and significant positive correlation between students' mastery of the simple past tense and their ability in translating recount texts.

Discussion

The findings of this study show a significant positive correlation between students' mastery of the simple past tense and their ability to translate recount texts. It can be concluded

that the better students' mastery of the simple past tense, the better their ability to translate recount texts. This supports previous studies (Masriani & Selle, 2018; Musbar & Tambunan, 2023) and emphasizes that grammar competence, especially tense usage, is essential in maintaining the chronological order and meaning of texts. The implication is that teachers should integrate tense-focused grammar instruction into translation practice to help students reduce reliance on dictionaries and improve independent translation performance.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study concludes that there is a significant positive correlation between students' mastery of the simple past tense and their ability in translating recount texts at SMA Muhammadiyah Rambah. Students with better tense mastery achieved higher translation accuracy, while those with weaker mastery struggled to convey meaning correctly. The findings underline the importance of grammar competence as a foundation for translation ability. Teachers should emphasize tense mastery in teaching recount texts and encourage students to practice translation exercises that integrate grammar. Future research is recommended to extend this study to other text genres or larger populations to validate and generalize the findings.

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