

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the analysis of data from the questionnaires, interviews with students, and compositions. The types and causes of errors are also presented. Errors found in the use of the simple past, simple present, present progressive and past progressive tenses are dealt with in this chapter. The errors are categorised following Corder's (1981) taxonomy of errors.

4.1 FINDINGS FROM STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

This section presents the findings from the student questionnaire given out to 60 students. The questionnaire was designed to provide information about the students' socio-economic background and to find out the extent of their exposure to the English language. The information gathered showed that 87% of the students came from the nearby Malay villages of Jalan Yadi and Kampung Delek, while 13% came from housing areas located in Klang town. Thus, it can be said that most of the subjects lived in predominantly Malay areas where English was not spoken. The study showed that most of the parents held low-income jobs, where 57% of them were factory workers, 28% were clerks in government and private sectors, 7% were businessmen, 5% held odd jobs while 3% were hawkers.

From the questionnaire, the researcher found that the subjects spoke no English at home simply because Malay was the only language understood and spoken at home. Socio-economic factors played a vital role in their inability to use the language at home as most of their parents, who came from the lower income group, were most likely not conversant in English. The subjects were only exposed to English in the classroom, where 80% claimed that they spoke only in English with their English teacher, while the other 20% spoke both English and Malay. Only 7% could afford the luxury of private tuition which the students attended mainly to prepare themselves for the PMR examination.

As for the language used with friends, 80% of the students indicated that they used Malay to speak with their friends. Using English was viewed as “inappropriate” among the subjects peer groups, and none of them spoke English with their peers. 20% indicated using English and Malay, but English was spoken with their friends only in the classroom. They felt that speaking in English with their Malay friends was inappropriate as all of them shared a common mother tongue and therefore Malay was the only accepted language within the peer group.

As to the types of reading material in English found at home, only very few of them had reading material at home. 12% reported that they had comics in their homes, followed by 5% having magazines. 3% of them reported having novels and short stories at home, while only 2% had newspapers.

None of the students reported having borrowed English books from the school library although the school has a well-equipped English Section. This shows a lack of interest in the English language outside the school environment.

As to the exposure to English from the media, more than 50% of the students reported having some kind of exposure. 57% of them listened to English songs over the radio, while 100% of them watched English programmes on television. The questionnaire also revealed the poor participation of students in their school activities in English. Only 7% of the students had participated in activities held during the English week, while 3% had taken part in the story telling competitions. Results from the questionnaire indicate that students lack exposure to the English language.

4.2 FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEW SESSIONS

12 subjects were selected and interviewed on why they made past tense and present tense errors in their written work. A total of 10 questions related to the subjects' difficulty in using the correct tenses were asked. (Refer to Appendix B). The interviews were carried out in the school library during the library period.

4.2.1 Responses from the Subjects

The subjects were individually interviewed. Each subject was presented with four sentences from his essay that had errors which the researcher had randomly picked out. The sentences were listed on a piece of paper and the subjects were asked to identify the errors in the sentences, and the reasons they made the errors in the simple present, simple past, present progressive and past progressive tenses. The following section presents the students' errors and their responses.

Subject A

1. * After that, we check in at the resort near the beach. (checked)
2. * At the 'underwater world', we could find many types of fish and sea creatures.
(found)

3. * We catch many types of fish. (caught)

4. * I feel so happy. (felt)

When asked to identify the errors in his sentence, Subject A did not know where the errors were located. When the errors were pointed out by the researcher, Subject A could not identify what the errors were. He stated that he made the errors due to lack of understanding of the rules of the simple past tense.

Subject B

1. * My family and I goes swimming at the beach. (went)

2. * My brother give me a sea shell. (gave)

3. * There we study about forest and jungles. (studied)

4. * I saw that my family were very tired. (was)

The above four sentences were presented to Subject B, and he was asked to correctly identify the errors. He was unable to do so. Subject B contended that the errors were made due to interference from his native language, Malay, where he used the rules of his mother tongue and applied them to the English language.

Subject C

1. * We arrive at 1.30 p.m. (arrived)
2. * Then, we book a room. (booked)
3. * We go to the room and rested. (went)
4. * At the water park, there was many water games. (were)

Subject C, when asked to locate the errors was unable to correctly identify the errors. He was unable to state why he committed the errors. He stated in Malay “Saya tak tahu” (I don’t know).

Subject D

1. * After that, my sisters and I was swimming in the cool, clear water. (swam)
2. * We also having time to make sand castles. (had)
3. * We feel so hungry. (felt)
4. * We buy a souvenir. (bought)

When the sentences were presented to Subject D, he could not locate the errors. He said that he made the errors because he had directly translated the sentences from his native language, Malay, into English.

Subject E

1. * We leave at 6.00 a.m. (left)
2. * We goes by car. (went)
3. * We take a ferry to cross over to the other side. (took)
4. * In the evening, we go to see the caves. (went)

Subject E was also unable to correctly locate or identify her errors in her sentences. She did not know why the errors occurred.

Subject F

1. Everyday I woke up early in the morning. (wake)
2. I took my bath and then I pray. (take)

3. My sister ^ so pretty. (is)
4. In the evening, I always plays with my friends. (play)

The above mentioned four erroneous sentences were shown to Subject F. He knew that there were errors in the sentences. Moreover, when asked to identify the errors, he was able to do so. He attributed his errors to translation from his native language.

Subject G

1. * I goes to school at 7.00 a.m. (go)
2. * I watching television in the evening. (watch)
3. * I ^ not a hot tempered person. (am)
4. * Everyday, I prayed at 7.30 a.m. (pray)

Subject G when asked to state where his errors were located, was not able to identify the errors. He was not sure why he committed the errors.

Subject H

1. * I goes to school at 6.55 a.m. (go)
2. * I reached home at 1.05 p.m. (reach)
3. * My sister and I ^ both in the same school. (are)
4. * At 4.30 p.m., I watching television. (watch)

When the above four sentences were presented to Subject H, she stated that she knew that there were errors in the sentences she had constructed. She was able to correctly identify where her errors were located. She attributed her errors to interference from her mother tongue.

Subject I

1. * My time was very precious. (is)
2. * I reached school at about 7.15 a.m. (reach)

3. * I helping my mother at the kitchen. (help)

4. * By 11.00 p.m. I ^ so tired. (am)

Subject I was unable to state where the errors were located in her sentences. She did not know why she made the errors.

Subject J

1. * Everyone have a daily routine. (has)

2. * Then I pray and rested for a while. (prayed)

3. * I waked up at 5.00 to pray. (wake)

4. * I does my homework at night. (do)

When asked to identify her errors, Subject J was unable to identify her errors. She also did not know why she committed the errors.

Subject K

1. * I am work hard. (working)
2. * My sister is cry loudly. (crying)
3. * My mother is bake a cake. (baking)
4. * She is talk loudly. (talking)

Subject K was also not able to correctly identify his errors. He could not state why he made the errors.

Subject L

1. * I was walk when I saw an accident. (walking)
2. * My mother was cook, when father came back. (cooking)
3. * We were shop, when we saw my friend. (shopping)
4. * As I was play, father came home. (playing)

Subject L, when asked to identify her errors, was unable to do so. She did not know why she committed the errors.

4.2.2 Summary of Findings from the Interviews

From the interview sessions, it is concluded that more than half of the students (58%) do not know why they have committed the errors in the four different erroneous sentences picked out from their compositions. However, the rest were able to identify their errors and state the reasons why they had committed those errors.

All the subjects also contended that the simple past tense was more difficult to understand than the simple present, present progressive and past progressive tenses due to verb changes and irregular verbs in the simple past tense. As for the simple present tense, the subjects stated that their area of difficulty was when describing an action in the present, where they were not sure if the verb changes for singular and plural subjects.

Table 4.1
Breakdown of Reasons for Errors.

Reasons for errors	No. of students	%
1. Don't know	7	58
2. Mother tongue interference	3	26
3. Incomplete application of rules	2	16
Total	12	100

Table 4.1 indicates the breakdown of the reasons for errors committed by the subjects in their essays. Based on the interview, it was found that 58% of the subjects did not know why they made the errors. The subjects were ignorant of the types of errors that they made. They knew that there were errors in their work, but were unable to identify the errors and state why such errors were committed.

26% of the subjects cited mother tongue or L1 interference. The subjects said that they thought in Malay and translated from Malay into English. In their mother tongue, the verb form does not change when using the singular and plural, and thus they were not clear on how the verb system works in the English language. Therefore, errors were made as they used the grammatical pattern of Malay language to write in English.

The Malay language has no tense marker 'ed' like in English to indicate whether an action has occurred in the present, past or future, and this was the cause of confusion, as the subjects omitted the tense marker 'ed' in the past tense. The difference between the learner's mother tongue and the English language, that is, the fact that the Malay language has different syntactic features in comparison to the English language, contributed to the production of errors due to first language interference.

16% of the subjects said that they made errors because of incomplete learning of the basic rules of the tenses. The subjects were ignorant of the concept of time, that is, the simple present tense is used for present events, while the simple past tense is used for an event that has already happened at a certain time in the past. The subjects also committed errors due to the overgeneralization of rules (rules of the tense system). For instance, the subjects tended to add the tense marker to every verb without understanding the rules. For example, in one of the subjects' scripts, the word 'waked' was found. This shows that the subject had over-generalized the rules by adding the tense marker to the word 'wake' making it 'waked' in the past tense, instead of 'woke'.

The findings from the interview session, lead one to the conclusion that the subjects faced problems in the use of the simple present, past, present progressive and past progressive tenses due to interference from their L1 and also ignorance of the tense system itself.

4.2.3 Interview with the Teachers

The researcher interviewed all the five English teachers who are teaching the English Language to Form Three students in Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Telok Gadong. The subjects are graduate English teachers.

(a) Teacher 1

Teacher 1 is a female teacher who is 35 years old. She has ten years of experience in teaching English to Form Three students. Currently, she is teaching three Form Three classes – two classes at the average level, and one at the above average level.

(b) Teacher 2

Teacher 2 is also a female teacher. She has sixteen years of experience in teaching Form Three. She has been teaching English to Form Three students for the past thirteen years. She is 42 years old. She is also teaching three Form Three classes – one average level class, and two above average level classes.

(c) Teacher 3

Teacher 3 is a male teacher, who is 39 years old. He has been teaching English for fifteen years but has only taught Form Three for five years. His classes consist of three average level classes.

(d) Teacher 4

Teacher 4 is 28 years old, and has four years of experience in teaching English. However, she has only two years of experience in teaching Form Three. She also teaches three Form Three classes which are of the below average level.

(e) Teacher 5

Teacher 5 is a female teacher, with 12 years of experience in teaching Form Three. She is 38 years old, and teaches two average level Form Three classes.

The following table summarizes the teachers' profile:

Table 4.2

Profile of Teachers

Number	Age	Sex	Teaching Experience In English	Form Three	No of classes presently teaching
Teacher 1	35	Female	10 years	10 years	3
Teacher 2	42	Female	16 years	13 years	3
Teacher 3	39	Male	15 years	5 years	3
Teacher 4	28	Female	4 years	2 years	3
Teacher 5	38	Female	12 years	12 years	2

4.2.4 Teaching of Tenses

The five teachers were interviewed on their perception of why students make errors in tenses and what strategies the teachers take to overcome the problems.

The response showed that the teachers' opinions varied with regard to the teaching of tenses. 90% of the teachers said that their students always faced difficulties when using the different tenses, while 10% said students sometimes faced difficulties. The students faced difficulties because they were unsure of which tense to use. 80 % of the teachers developed strategies to deal with the students' difficulties in verbs. These strategies include giving the student more exercise in verbs and also reading articles that used the different tenses.

4.3 FINDINGS FROM THE COMPOSITIONS.

120 scripts of free-writing essays from 60 Form Three Malay students of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Telok Gadong, Klang, a semi-rural school in the state of Selangor, were collected. Each student produced two essays, one in the present tense, and one in the past tense. The essays were then marked for errors in the simple present, simple past, present progressive and past progressive tenses. Samples of the essays written by the students are included in Appendix G. There is a total of 3533 correct and incorrect usage of the simple present, simple past, present progressive and past progressive tenses found in the compositions. Of this total, 1804 consists of incorrect usage of the tenses. The percentage of correct and incorrect uses of each tense is shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Data of Correct and Incorrect Usage of the Simple Present, Simple Past, Present Progressive and Past Progressive Tenses

	Simple Past		Simple Present		Present Progressive		Past Progressive	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Correct Usage	991	37.2	289	48.9	46	56.7	101	51.5
Incorrect Usage	1674	62.8	302	51.1	35	43.3	95	48.6
Total Usage	2665	100	591	100	81	100	196	100

In Table 4.3 it can be observed that the subjects made the most number of errors in the simple past tense, committing a total of 1674 errors or 62.8%, followed by errors in the simple present tense, with 302 errors or 51.1%. The reason for making more errors in the simple past tense as compared to the simple present tense could be due to the fact that the simple past tense was more difficult for the students as they were not aware of conjugations in the past tense. The errors made in the present and past progressive tenses were comparatively lower with only 35 errors or 43.3% in the present progressive tense, followed by 95 errors or 48.6% in the past progressive tense.

Table 4.4 illustrates a detailed analysis of the incorrect usage of the simple past tense, the simple present tense, the present progressive tense and the past progressive tense. The errors are categorized into three main error categories, namely, selection errors, omission errors and addition errors. The table shows the distribution of errors in the three categories, as found in the essays.

Table 4.4
Distributions of Error Categories

Error Categories	Simple Past		Simple Present		Present Progressive		Past Progressive	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1. Selection Errors	948	56.6	116	38.4	26	74.2	67	69.0
2. Addition Errors	546	32.6	0	0	0	0	0	0
3. Omission Errors	180	10.8	186	61.6	9	25.8	30	31.0
Total No. Of Errors	1674	100.0	302	100.0	35	100.0	97	100.0

In Table 4.4, the errors in the simple past tense, simple present tense, present progressive tense and past progressive tense are categorized into three error categories, namely selection errors, addition errors and omission errors. The highest percentage of the simple past tense errors is found in the selection category, which has a total of 948 errors or

56.6 % of the total number of simple past tense errors (1674 errors). The second most number of errors is in the addition category which has 546 errors or 32.6% of the total number of the simple past tense errors; followed by the omission category which has 180 errors or 10.8% of the total number of the simple past tense errors.

For the simple present tense, the highest occurrence of errors is in the omission category, which is a total of 186 errors or 61.6% of the total number of simple present tense errors, followed by the selection category which has 116 errors or 38.4% of the total number. There are no errors in the addition category.

In the progressive tense, the highest category of errors is in the selection category with a total of 26 errors or 74.2%, while the omission category has 9 errors or 25.8%. There are no errors in the addition category. The past progressive tense also has more selection errors with a total of 67 errors or 69.0%, while omission errors constitute 30 errors or 31%. Like in the simple present and present progressive tenses, there are no addition errors found in the past progressive tense.

The findings from the data show that the students face difficulties in selecting the correct verb to indicate the correct time reference. This implies that the students probably do not know how to use the concept of time, both for the simple past tense as well as the simple present tense.

The three categories of errors in the simple past tense, the simple present tense, the present progressive tense and the past progressive tense will be discussed in the following section.

4.4 SIMPLE PAST TENSE

Errors in the simple past tense will be discussed in terms of selection errors, addition errors and omission errors.

4.4.1 Selection Errors

Selection errors has the highest percentage of past tense errors made by the students. This indicates that the students have selected the incorrect verb forms. The total number of simple past tense selection errors is 948 or 56.6% of the overall number of errors found in the data. Table 4.5 shows the distribution of selection errors of the simple past tense.

Table 4.5

Distribution of Selection Errors in the Simple Past Tense

Selection Errors	Frequency	%
1. The use of simple present for simple past	785	82.8
2. The use of past progressive for simple past	58	6.1
3. The use of incorrect verb forms	36	3.8
4. The use of singular verb for plural verb	23	2.6
5. The use of plural verb for singular verb	18	1.8
6. The use of to-infinitive for simple past	15	1.6
7. The use of -ing form for simple past	13	1.3
Total	948	100.0

As shown in Table 4.5, the highest frequency of selection errors of the simple past tense is in the use of the simple present tense instead of the simple past tense, which is a total of 82.8% errors, followed by 6.1% of errors in the use of the past progressive for the simple past. The reason for such a high frequency of selection errors could probably be due to the fact that the students are not well versed with the change of verbs in the simple past tense.

The subjects have used the simple present tense instead of the simple past tense to express an action completed in the past at a definite past time. Shown below are examples taken from the students' essays.

- * During the last holidays, I visit Pulau Langkawi. (visited)
- * My brother play in the water. (played)
- * After that, I swim in the pool. (swam)
- * At the shopping center, I buy a bag. (bought)

Redundancy could be the reason for the high occurrence of errors in this category as the students may find it redundant to add a past tense marker to the verbs as the past time adverbials are also used. Richards (1974) states that the '-ed' marker may seem to carry no meaning since 'pastness' is usually indicated lexically. The subjects in this study have used the root word and not changed it to the past tense. The 'ed' marker should have been added to the verbs 'visit' and 'play', changing them into past tense verbs, namely 'visited' and 'played', respectively. In the third and fourth sentences, the irregular past tense forms, 'swam' and 'bought', should have been used.

The next highest frequency of selection errors is in the use of the past progressive tense for the simple past tense contributing to a total of 58 errors or 6.1% of the total errors in the simple past tense. The following are examples of such errors.

- * In Kelantan, my mother was buying a new dress. (bought)
- * I was running at the beach. (ran)
- * I was so tired that at night I was sleeping early. (slept)

The sentences above are incorrect as the students used the past progressive tense to express an action completed in the past at a definite past time. The subjects have wrongly used 'was buying' for 'bought', 'was running' for 'ran' and 'was sleeping' for 'slept'. The probable reason for such errors could be due to incomplete learning of the tenses. The learner may have assumed that the progressive tense in English is used to describe events that occur at a specific time in the past.

The third highest frequency of selection errors is in the use of the incorrect verb forms making a total of 36 errors or 3.8% as shown in Table 4.5. These errors show that the students do not know the correct past tense forms of the verbs.

A closer examination of the verb form errors reveals that all the errors are committed in the use of the irregular verbs, rather than the regular verbs. In fact, there are no errors found in the regular verb forms. The study reveals that the subjects are not familiar with the irregular verbs and this accounts for the high occurrence of selection errors in this category. The subjects do not face problems when using the regular verbs probably because they use only the regular verbs that they are familiar with. Table 4.6 shows some of the types of errors in the irregular verb forms.

Table 4.6

Types of Errors based on the Spelling Rules of Irregular Verb Forms

Base Form	The Past Form	Incorrect Verb Forms
put	put	putted
hurt	hurt	hurted
give	gave	gaved
sing	sang	singed
take	took	take
see	saw	sawed
bring	brought	bringed
leave	left	leaved

Irregular verbs are incorrectly spelt probably due to over-generalization. The subjects have used the past tense markers 'd' and 'ed' of regular verb forms for irregular ones, and this has resulted in the generalized forms such as 'leaved', 'gived' and 'bringed', instead of 'left', 'gave' and 'brought', respectively. Another possible reason could be due to the fact that learners may not know that irregular verbs differ from regular verbs.

In the use of the singular verb for the plural verb, there is a total of 23 errors (2.6%).

These errors are seen in the following sentences.

- * We was excited to see the show. (were)
- * They was playing happily at the beach. (were)
- * My brothers was very tired. (were)

In the above sentences, the wrong verb has been selected to agree with the subject and therefore, the sentences are grammatically incorrect. The students have wrongly used the verb 'was' for plural subjects, instead of using the verb 'were'. In the English language, the verb agrees with the subject, while in the learner's mother tongue, the verb form does not change for singular and plural subjects. Therefore, errors like this could be a result of mother-tongue interference.

Errors are also found in the use of the plural verb for the singular verb, making a total number of 18 errors (1.8%). The following sentences illustrate this:-

- * My sister were so happy to see her friend. (was)
- * My father were tired after driving for so long. (was).
- * The cat were put in the basket. (was)

Here again, the sentences are ungrammatical because the students have selected the wrong verb to agree with the subject. The subjects have used the verb 'were' for a singular subject instead of 'was'. This type of error could also be due to L1 interference.

In the use of the *to- infinitive* for simple past, there are 15 errors (8%). The errors are seen in the following sentences.

- * My brother to play volleyball on the beach. (played)
- * I to eat lunch at the hotel. (ate)
- * I to shop at the shopping complex. (shopped)

Errors such as these – 'to play' instead of 'played', 'to eat' instead of 'ate' and 'to shop' instead of 'shopped' - are made because the students have not mastered the grammar rule that after the 'to' infinitive, the verb used should not be inflected. Thus, these types of errors could be due to ignorance of rule restriction.

The final type of selection errors in the simple past tense is in the use of the '-ing' form for the simple past. This constitute 13 errors (1.3%). Typical examples are illustrated in the following sentences.

- * I playing on the beach. (played)
- * I watching television with my sister at night. (watched)
- * We clapping hands by the fire. (clapped)

The above sentences are erroneous because the ‘-ing’ form is used instead of the simple past tense. The subjects have used the ‘-ing’ form, that is, ‘playing’ for ‘played’, ‘watching’ for ‘watched’ and ‘clapping’ for ‘clapped’. The sentences refer to an action completed in the past at a definite past time, and therefore, are incorrect. The possible reason for this type of error could be due to the learners interpreting the sentences as a continuous action, therefore using the ‘-ing’ form.

4.4.2 Addition Errors

For addition errors, the total number of simple past tense errors is 546 or 32.6% of the overall number of errors found in the data. The distribution of addition errors in the simple past tense are illustrated in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7

Distribution of Addition Errors in the Simple Past Tense

Addition Errors	Frequency	%
1. Addition of BE (was) before the simple past verb	186	34.0
2. Addition of BE (were) before the simple past verb	173	31.6
3. Addition of BE (are) before the simple past verb	63	11.5
4. Addition of BE (am) before the simple past verb	52	9.5
5. Addition of BE (was/were) + base verb for the simple past verb	43	7.8
6. Addition of BE (was) + to + -ing participle for the simple past verb	29	5.6
Total	546	100.0

Table 4.7 shows the different types of addition errors in the simple past tense. The highest frequency of addition errors of the simple past tense is in the addition of BE (was) before the simple past verb. The number of errors in this category is 186 or 34.0 of the total number of errors. Below are samples of this type of error found in the data.

- * I was played football. (played)
- * I was woke up early as I was so excited. (woke)
- * The bus was came late. (came)
- * My mother was cooked dinner. (cooked)

The subjects have added the BE (was) form and used 'was played' instead of 'played', 'was woke' instead of 'woke', 'was came' instead of 'came' and 'was cooked' instead of 'cooked'. This could be due to the overgeneralization of the verb BE, where students may have overgeneralized that the BE verb could be used with the simple past tense.

The next type of addition errors is the addition of BE (were) before the simple past verb, with 31.6% or a total of 173 errors. The following examples illustrate this type of error.

- * My father and I were went to the theatre. (went)
- * My sisters were jumped in the water. (jumped)
- * My friend and I were played to the field to play football. (played)

The verb BE was put before the main verb in the above sentences. The students have used 'were went' instead of 'went'. The students may have incorrectly hypothesized the forms of BE as tense markers and used the BE verb as past-tense markers with the past tense form of the verb. This could be due to ignorance of rule restrictions by the learners.

Another type of addition errors is the addition of BE (are) before the simple past verb, and this constitutes 63 errors (11.5%) of the total number of addition errors. The following examples are found in the students' work. In the examples shown below, the subjects have added 'are' to their sentences and used 'are went' instead of 'went', 'are felt' instead of 'felt', 'are fried' instead of 'fried' and 'are saw' instead of 'saw'.

- * We are went to the zoo. (went)
- * They are felt very tired. (felt)
- * We are fried fish. (fried)
- * We are saw a movie in my uncle's house. (saw)

Another type of addition errors in the simple past tense made by the students is the addition of BE (am) before the simple past verb, with 9.5% or a total of 52 errors. Some of the examples found in the data are presented. There is an addition of the verb BE (am) in the students' sentences followed by the past tense verb as in 'am jumped' instead of 'jumped', 'am ran' instead of 'ran', and 'am told' instead of 'told' as in the following sentences:

- * I am jumped in the swimming pool. (jumped)
- * I am ran to the beach. (ran)
- * I am told my grandmother about my new school. (told)

Another type of addition errors is in the addition of BE (was/were) + base verb for the simple past verb. This accounts for a total of 43 errors or 7.8%. The examples of the errors are given below. In the sentences below, the subjects have added 'was' in the first two sentences, and used 'was play' for 'played' and 'was make' for 'made'. In the third and fourth sentences, the subjects have added 'were' making it 'were take' instead of 'took', and was buy' for 'bought'.

- * I was play in the water. (played)
- * I was make a kite. (made)
- * We were take a flight to Penang. (took)
- * My sister was buy a beautiful dress. (bought)

The last type of addition errors found in the data is in the addition of BE (was) + to + ing participle for the simple past verb with 5.6%(29 errors). The errors are illustrated below.

- * I was to watching television with my mother. (watched)
- * My sister was to making a sandcastle. (made)
- * My father was to driving to Kedah. (drove)

In short, errors in the addition category occur probably because of overgeneralizations of the BE verbs in the simple past tense constructions.

4.4.3 Omission Errors

There is a total of 180 or 10.8% of omission errors in the simple past tense found in the compositions. The distribution of omission errors of the simple past tense is shown in Table 4.8..

Table 4.8
Distribution of Omission Errors in the Simple Past Tense

Omission Errors	Frequency	%
1. Omission of copula BE (was)	85	47.2
2. Omission of copula BE (were)	58	32.2
3. Omission of main verb	37	20.5
Total	180	100.0

Omission errors in the simple past tense occur because students have not followed the rules of the language, that is the subject in English is followed by the verb. The most number of omission errors in the simple past tense is in the omission of the copula BE (was), with 47.2% or a total of 85 errors. The next highest frequency of omission errors in the simple past tense is in the omission of the copula BE(were), which has 58 errors or 32.2% or the

total number of errors, followed by the omission of the main verb with 20.5 or a total of 37 errors.

Below are examples of errors which contain the omission of the copula BE (was) and the omission of the copula BE (were). In the first two sentences, the subjects have omitted 'was' and in the next two sentences, the subjects have omitted the copula BE (were).

- * I ^ so happy that I could not sleep. (was)
- * I ^ sad to leave my grandmother's house. (was)
- * My brothers ^ scared of the snake. (were)
- * My father ^ tired after the journey. (was)

From the above examples, it can be concluded that BE as the main verb is omitted before the adjective due to the fact that in the Malay language, there is no auxiliary. Thus, the learners could have used the grammatical pattern of Malay to write in English. For example:

Malay : Saya takut.

Direct Translation into English : I scared instead of *I was scared*.

As a result of direct translation, the student has omitted the verb 'BE' in the above examples, thus producing the sentence "I scared", instead of "I was scared".

In the category of omission of the main verb, the following errors are found in the data:

- * Then we ^ back to our hotel for dinner. (went)
- * After that we ^ ready to leave the hotel. (got)
- * When we ^ back, it was late. (came)

In the sentences above, the main verbs 'went', 'got' and 'came' have been omitted. The above mentioned errors occur because the students are not aware that in English, the subject is followed by a verb.

4.5 SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE

Errors in the simple present tense will be discussed in terms of selection errors and omission errors.

4.5.1 Selection Errors

When using the Simple Present Tense, students made a number of selection errors. The total number of selection errors were 116 or 38.4% of the total number of errors found in the data.

The distribution of selection errors in the present tense is shown in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9

Distribution of Selection Errors in the Simple Present Tense

Selection Errors	Frequency	%
1. Use of simple past for simple present	52	44.8
2. Use of incorrect subject-verb concord	40	34.5
3. Use of future continuous for simple present	18	15.6
4. Use of present progressive for simple present	6	5.1
Total	116	100.0

Table 4.9 shows that the highest frequency of selection errors of the simple present tense is in the use of simple past for simple present with a total of 52 errors or 44.8%. The high percentage of errors shows that subjects faced some problems when using the present tense. The following are examples of errors in the use of the simple past for simple present that are found in the data.

- * I ate my breakfast at 6.30 a.m. every morning. (eat)
- * I prayed after I reach home. (pray)
- * Then, I washed my face. (wash)
- * My father took me to school everyday. (takes)
- * I came back home at 2.00p.m. (come)

The above sentences formed by the students are incorrect because the simple past tense is used instead of the simple present tense. The subjects have used the past form 'ate' for 'eat', 'prayed' for 'pray', 'washed' for 'wash', 'took' for 'takes' and 'came' for 'come'. When describing an action that is in the present, students tend to use the past tense, and these errors seem to occur because students are uncertain of which tense to use.

The next type of selection errors of the present tense is in subject-verb concord with a total of 40 errors or 34.5%. These errors are illustrated in the examples below.

- * Both my sisters is good in English. (are)
- * Azmi and Shafiz is my best friends. (are)
- * My teacher are very strict. (is)
- * Sometimes, my uncle who are teaching in my school takes me home. (is)

The above mentioned errors show a lack of concord between the subject and the verb. The first two sentences show that the students use the singular verb "is" with a plural subject. In the third and fourth sentences, subjects use the plural verb "are" with a singular subject. Although a small percentage of these errors could be due to carelessness, most of the errors could be due to the fact the subjects' do not have a basic understanding of subject-verb concord.

Another type of selection errors in the present tense is in the use of the future continuous instead of the simple present tense, which contribute a total of 18 errors or 15.6%. The following are examples of such errors.

- * I will be going to school at 7.00 am. (go)
- * Usually I will be reaching home at 1.00p.m. (reach)
- * My mother will be cooking lunch for me everyday. (cooks)
- * My friends and I will be playing badminton in the evening. (play)

Instead of using the present tense, the subjects have used the future continuous tense to express an action that is in the present. They have used 'will be going' for 'go', 'will be reaching' for 'reach', 'will be cooking' for 'cooks' and 'will be playing' for 'play'. These errors can also be attributed to students' ignorance of the use of the present tense and its continuous forms.

As can be seen in Table 4.9, the final type of selection errors is in the use of the present progressive for the simple present tense. There are 6 errors, which constitute 5.1% of the total number of selection errors found in the data. The subjects tend to use the present progressive tense when narrating their daily activities. The subjects are found to have changed the base form of the verb to the present progressive tense. The subjects have used 'are going' instead of 'go', 'are taking' instead of 'take', 'are playing' instead of 'play', and 'am helping' instead of 'help'. Most of the subjects are unaware of the concept of time in relation to the tenses. The examples below illustrate the use of the present progressive tense for the simple present tense.

- * My brother and I are going to school at 6.45 am. (go)
- * I am taking a bus to my tuition class. (take)
- * In the evening, we are playing badminton. (play)
- * I am helping my brother to do his homework at night. (help)

4.5.2 Omission Errors

There was a high occurrence of this type of errors in the students' essays. There were 186 present tense errors in the essay or 61.6% of the total number of errors found in the corpus. This could probably be due to L1 interference as the subjects directly translated from their native language. All the errors in this category were in the omission of the auxiliary BE as can be seen in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10

Distribution of Omission Errors in the Simple Present Tense

Omission Errors	Frequency	%
1. Omission of auxiliary BE	186	100
Total	186	100

Table 4.10 shows that all the errors in the present tense in the omission category are in the omission of the auxiliary BE. This could probably be due to carelessness, or the students' ignorance of the BE verb when using the present tense. Another factor could be due to the fact they do not use auxiliary verbs in their native language. Following are some examples found in the essay.

- * The weather ^ hot when I walk back. (is)
- * My baby brother ^ so cute (is)
- * My father ^ a labourer. (is)
- * My sister and I ^ both in the same school. (are)
- * I ^ a happy person (am)
- * My sister^ so pretty. (is)

As stated above, these types of errors occur due to mother-tongue interference as the students have directly translated from their mother tongue. The subjects have omitted the auxiliary BE ('is' and 'are') because in Malay the auxiliary BE is not needed before an adjective. For example in the sentence ' My sister ^ so pretty. (is), when translated to the subjects' mother tongue is 'Kakak saya sangat cantik'. Thus, the auxiliary is also not used when writing in English.

4.6 PRESENT PROGRESSIVE TENSE

Errors in the present progressive tense will be discussed in terms of selection and omission errors.

4.6.1 Selection Errors

Table 4.11 presents the distribution of selection errors in the present progressive tense.

Table 4.11

Distribution of Selection Errors in the Present Progressive Tense

Selection Errors	Frequency	%
1. The use of simple present tense for present progressive tense	17	65.4
2. The use of past progressive tense for present progressive tense	9	34.6
Total No. Of Errors	26	100.0

Table 4.11 indicates that the most number of verb tense selection errors of the present progressive tense is in the use of the simple present tense. The following are examples of such errors.

- * I write a letter to my grandfather. (am writing)
- * My exam is soon and that is why I study hard. (am studying)

The sentences above are incorrect because the simple present tense is used instead of the present progressive tense. In the first sentence, it is incorrect to use the simple present verb 'write' since this verb implies habitual action. Habitual action does not occur with the time adverbial 'at this moment' but instead, with the present progressive verb 'am writing'. In the next sentence, the present progressive tense should have been used because the event is seen as an activity in progress.

The students have also substituted the present progressive tense for the past progressive tense as can be seen in the following examples.

- * I was calling to let you know how mother is. (am calling)

This sentence is incorrect because the past progressive tense is used instead of the present progressive tense to describe a progressive action which is happening at the present moment. This error could be due to students not recognizing the present time frame.

4.6.2 Omission Errors

There are only 9 omission errors occurrences. This could be the result of students avoiding the present progressive tense in their essays.

Table 4.12

Distribution Of Omission Errors in the Present Progressive Tense

Omission Errors	Frequency	%
1. Omission of auxiliary BE	6	66.6
2. Omission of -ing form	3	33.4

As can be seen from Table 4.12, students tend to omit the auxiliary BE when using the present progressive tense. Below are some of the examples.

- * My mother ^ asking me to eat. (is)
- * I ^ walking as fast as I can. (am)
- * My sister ^ playing outside. (is)

The types of errors could be attributed to the students' ignorance of the BE verb when using the present progressive tense.

Another type of omission error of the present progressive tense is the omission of the ‘-ing’ form. Below are examples.

- * I am study hard. (studying)
- * My sister is laugh loudly. (laughing)
- * My mother is bake a cake. (baking)

The omission of the ‘-ing’ progressive marker could be due to intralingual transfer, that is, the incomplete learning of rules for the present progressive tense.

4.7 PAST PROGRESSIVE TENSE

Errors in the past progressive will be discussed in terms of selection errors and omission errors.

4.7.1 Selection Errors

The total number of selection errors in the past progressive tense is 67 which constitute 69% of the total number of errors found in the past progressive tense. It can be deduced that students have difficulty in the use of the past progressive tense as shown in the high frequency of errors committed.

Table 4.13

Distribution of Selection Errors in the Past Progressive Tense

Selection Errors	Frequency	%
1. The use of simple past for past progressive	25	37.3
2. The use of simple present for past progressive	18	26.9
3. The use of present progressive for past progressive	14	20.9
4. The use of incorrect subject-verb concord	10	14.9
Total	67	100.0

Table 4.13 shows that the highest frequency of selection errors in the past progressive is in the use of the simple past for the past progressive with a total of 25 errors or 37.3%. This could be due to the fact that students do not know the usage of the past progressive. The students may not know the concept of time, that the past progressive expresses an action that is in progress at a point of time in the past. Shown below are some typical examples.

- * When we played, the ball crashed into a car. (were playing)
- * While my mother cooked lunch, the telephone rang. (was cooking)
- * I watched television when my friend came. (was watching)

The sentences above are incorrect because the simple past tense is used instead of the past progressive tense. In the sentences above, one action began earlier and was in progress when the other action occurred, and therefore the past progressive tense should be used. These errors occur because the students are most probably unclear regarding the form and the use of the simple past and past progressive tense.

The next highest frequency of selection errors in the past progressive tense is found in the use of the simple present instead of the past progressive tense, making a total of 18 errors or 26.9%. The following examples illustrate this error.

- * While my mother cooks dinner, the phone rang. (was cooking)
- * I clean my room when Shahrul came. (was cleaning)
- * We listen to the radio, when grandma arrived. (were listening)

The students have used the simple present tense to express an action in progress in the past instead of using the past progressive tense. These errors could be attributed to students' ignorance of the concept of time, that is, the simple present tense is used for present events, while the past progressive tense is used for an event that was in progress at a certain time in the past.

Another type of selection error in the past progressive is in the use of the present progressive tense for the past progressive tense. In table 4.13, it can be observed that there are 14 errors, or 20.9% of the total number of selection errors found in the compositions. The students have used the present progressive instead of the past progressive tense. This

could be due to the fact that they do not know the concept of time in relation to the past progressive tense. Shown below are examples that illustrate the use of the present progressive tense for the past progressive tense.

- * My sister and I are going to the shop when we saw an accident. (were)
- * My brother is happy with the gift. (was)
- * We are walking in the beach when we saw some shells. (were)

The last type of selection errors is the past progressive tense is in the subject-verb concord with a total of 10 errors or 14.9%. These errors are illustrated in the following examples.

- * My brother were playing when his friend came. (was)
- * The students was studying when the teacher entered. (were)
- * As I were eating, my mother came home. (was)

As shown in the sentences above, the students use the singular verb 'was' with a plural subject, and the plural verb 'were' with a singular subject. Errors of this type could be due to negative transfer from the L1 as there is no subject-verb agreement in the students' mother tongue.

4.7.2 Omission Errors

In this category, there are only 30 errors, or 25.8% of the total number of errors in the past progressive tense. The distribution of omission errors in the past progressive tense is shown in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14

Distribution of Omission Errors in the Past Progressive Tense

Omission Errors	Frequency	%
1. Omission of auxiliary BE	16	53.3
2. Omission of -ing form	14	46.7
Total	30	100.0

Table 4.14 shows that there are more errors in the omission of the auxiliary BE in the past progressive tense. There are 16 errors or 53.3%. This could most probably be due to the students' ignorance of the form of past progressive tense which is formed by BE + V-ing. The following are some of the examples that are found in the data.

- * My mother ^ baking a cake. (was)
- * I ^ laughing so loudly. (was)
- * My sisters ^ playing. (were)

The second type of omission errors in the past progressive tense is the omission of the '-ing' form with a total of 14 errors or 46.7%. The errors are illustrated below.

- * My sister was buy a new dress when she saw her friend. (buying)
- * I was talk with my friend when I saw an accident. (talking)

- * My sister was buy a new dress when she saw her friend. (buying)
- * I was talk with my friend when I saw an accident. (talking)

The students' here are not aware of the progressive forms and that the auxiliary BE (was) and the verb stem cannot be combined.. This could be the result of incomplete learning of the rules of the past progressive tense.

4.8 CONCLUSION

The researcher found that the essays, questionnaires and interviews have provided a better understanding of the subjects' level of proficiency in the use of the simple past tense and the simple present tense. The findings reveal that there are different error types and frequency in both the past and present tenses.

From the questionnaires, it was seen that all the subjects spoke only Malay at home, and not only was their exposure to English at home minimal, and there was also a lack of interest in the English language outside the classroom. From the interview sessions with the students and the teachers, it was concluded that interlingual and intralingual factors contributed to the errors made by the students in the present and past tenses.

The findings from the essays revealed that the highest frequency of errors was in the simple past tense, followed by the simple present, the present progressive and past progressive tenses. Thus, it can be deduced that the students found the simple past tense the most difficult to use. This could be due to mother tongue interference and the lack of knowledge about the rules of the simple past tense. The students also found the notion of irregular verbs and the concept of time difficult. Another possible reason could also be due to subjects paying more attention to the content of their essay, and not to the grammatical rules.

The lower frequency of errors of the simple present tense as compared to the simple past tense in the compositions could be because of the avoidance strategy used by subjects when writing in the simple present tense. The subjects could have avoided using structures that they were not familiar with and as a result, committed fewer errors. Fewer errors may also indicate that the subjects know the simple present tense better than the simple past tense. There were few errors in the present progressive and past progressive tenses and this could also be attributed to avoidance strategy where the subjects could have avoided using the progressive tenses, and instead used only the simple tenses.