


An Error Analysis Of Simple Future Tense Usage In The Writings Of Sixth-Grade Elementary School Students

Fitrah Marhamah¹, Eva Betty Simanjuntak², Ida Romian Br Pasaribu³, Nur Ainun Luthfia⁴, Yulia Habiba Hasibuan⁵, Yuyun Elfriede Capah⁶

^{1,2,3,4,5,6} Universitas Negeri Medan, Medan - Indonesia

Email: Marhamahfitrah@gmail.com

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jerkin.v3i4.1223>

ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received: 3 Juny 2025

Revised: 10 Juny 2025

Accepted: 14 Juny 2025

Kata kunci

Simple Future Tense, Analisis Kesalahan, Siswa SD, Tata Bahasa

Keywords

Simple Future Tense, Error Analysis, Elementary Students, Grammar



ABSTRACT

Studi ini meneliti bagaimana siswa kelas enam di SDN 101879 menggunakan simple future tense, dengan fokus pada kesalahan tata bahasa umum dalam tulisan mereka. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan metode campuran, data dikumpulkan melalui tes tertulis yang dirancang untuk mengevaluasi penggunaan kata "will" dan "be going to" oleh siswa dalam konstruksi kalimat. Analisis tersebut mengidentifikasi tiga jenis kesalahan utama: kesalahan pembentukan (50%), penghilangan (30%), dan penambahan (20%). Kesalahan pembentukan merupakan kesalahan yang paling sering terjadi, yang menunjukkan kesulitan dalam menerapkan aturan tata bahasa yang benar. Kesalahan ini menunjukkan keterbatasan pengetahuan tata bahasa, gangguan bahasa pertama, dan kebingungan tentang struktur kalimat. Hasilnya menyoroti pentingnya menggunakan strategi pengajaran yang lebih kontekstual dan interaktif untuk membantu siswa menggunakan tenses bahasa Inggris dengan lebih akurat di tingkat dasar.

This study examines how sixth-grade students at SDN 101879 use the simple future tense, with a focus on common grammar errors in their writing. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were gathered through a written test designed to evaluate students' use of "will" and "be going to" in sentence construction. The analysis identified three main error types: misformation (50%), omission (30%), and addition (20%). Misformation was the most frequent, suggesting difficulties in applying correct grammar rules. These errors point to limited grammatical knowledge, first-language interference, and confusion about sentence structure. The results highlight the importance of using more contextual and interactive teaching strategies to help students use English tenses more accurately at the elementary level.



This is an open access article under the [CC-BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license.

How to Cite: Fitrah Marhamah, et al (2025) An Error Analysis Of Simple Future Tense Usage In The Writings Of Sixth-Grade Elementary School Students, 3(4). 4161-4167 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jerkin.v3i4.1223>

INTRODUCTION

At SDN 101879, many students still struggle with writing in English, especially when expressing future events using correct grammar. Grammar is essential for clear and logical communication in both academic and everyday settings. One key structure in English is the simple future tense, used to describe actions expected to happen later. Despite its importance, students often make errors such as using the wrong verb form after "will" (e.g., present or past tense instead of the base verb), omitting auxiliary verbs like "will" or "shall," or adding unnecessary words that confuse the sentence.

These mistakes can obscure the intended meaning and lead to misunderstandings. To address these difficulties, error analysis is widely used in applied linguistics and second language acquisition.

Ellis (2003) explains that error analysis involves identifying, describing, and explaining learners' errors, providing insight into their language development. This approach also helps teachers improve their instructional methods. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) categorize errors into two main types: interlingual interference, where learners transfer patterns from their first language, and intralingual errors, which result from incomplete or overgeneralized knowledge of English rules. For example, an Indonesian student might write "I will go to school yesterday," mixing tenses due to first language influence.

Previous research offers valuable insights into these challenges. Fitria (2018) found that verb and noun agreement errors remain common even in junior high school, indicating persistent confusion about the future tense. Rohmiyati and Fatoni (2024) classified errors into omission, addition, misformation, and misordering, finding that misformation errors—like "will goes" instead of "will go"—were the most frequent. This suggests students try to use the future tense but lack full understanding of its correct form.

Building on these studies, this research focuses on sixth-grade elementary students, a group often overlooked in grammar research. It aims to identify the types of errors they make with the simple future tense through analysis of their written work. By exploring error patterns and their causes—whether from first language influence, confusion about English rules, or teaching gaps—this study hopes to guide more effective, learner-focused grammar teaching. Instruction should move beyond memorizing rules and offer meaningful, contextual practice to help students internalize correct grammar. Early intervention is crucial to prevent fossilizing incorrect forms, which become harder to correct later.

METHODE

Research design

This study uses a mixed-methods approach to explore sixth-grade students' understanding of the simple future tense. Qualitatively, it analyzes students' written work to identify and describe grammar errors in context, offering insights into how they naturally form future tense sentences (Alwasilah, 2002). Quantitatively, it measures how often specific errors occur—like wrong verb forms, misuse of "will" or "shall," and incorrect sentence structure. By combining both methods, the study provides a clearer picture of the most common challenges students face.

Data Collecting Technique

The data in this research were collected through a written test focused on the use of the simple future tense. Fifteen sixth-grade elementary students participated by completing writing tasks designed to reveal their understanding and ability to construct sentences using will and be going to. The researcher first prepared the test and explained the instructions clearly to the students. After giving them enough time to complete the task, the students' written compositions were collected and analyzed to identify the types and frequency of grammatical errors. The results were used to evaluate their grasp of the simple future tense and highlight the most common mistakes.

Technique of Analyzing Data

This research is a quantitative descriptive study using a descriptive survey method, aiming to describe students' ability in interpreting measuring instruments based on data collected through measurement questionnaires. The data were gathered using questionnaires distributed to 10 sixth-grade students at SD Negeri 101879, as well as through interviews with the teacher to obtain an overview of the students' understanding of the simple future tense at the elementary school level.

The data analysis technique used to assess students' understanding of the simple future tense was based on the scores obtained by the students, which were then categorized according to specific criteria. The percentage score was calculated using the following formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where: P: percentage number

F: frequency of error

N: the number of error analysis

Then, the data interpretation and the conclusion can be formulated after the data analysis process is completed. The percentage score representing students' ability to interpret measurement results was then categorized based on Table 1.

Table 1. Categories of Measurement Interpretation Ability

| Score Interval | Category |
|----------------|-----------|
| 86 – 100% | Very Good |
| 76 – 85% | Good |
| 60 – 75% | Fair |
| 55 – 59% | Poor |
| ≤ 54% | Very Poor |

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research aim to answer the research objectives as formulated in the background of the study. This study was conducted to identify the types of error analysis found in students' written responses, specifically in the use of the simple future tense, and to determine the most dominant type of error committed by sixth-grade elementary students. The data were collected through a grammar test consisting of multiple-choice and short-answer questions. The students were required to complete simple future tense sentences based on basic structures using will and be going to. Based on the analysis of their written answers, three main types of errors were identified according to Ellis's (2003) and Dulay, Burt, & Krashen's (1982) error classification, namely: omission, misformation, and addition.

Omission Errors

Omission errors occur when students leave out necessary grammatical elements in a sentence. According to Ellis (2003), these missing components usually involve auxiliary verbs, articles, prepositions, or even main verbs.

For Example

Wrong I will school tomorrow.

Correct I will go to school tomorrow.

The student omitted the main verb go after will. In simple future tense, will must always be followed by a base verb (V1). The word school is a noun, not a verb. Without a verb, the sentence is grammatically incomplete and does not convey the intended action. The learner likely translated directly from their native language without applying English grammar rules.

For Example

Wrong I will go school.

Correct I will go to school.

The preposition to is missing between the verb go and the noun school. The verb go in English must be followed by to when indicating direction or destination. This omission reflects a lack of awareness of prepositional use in English sentence structure.

For Example

Wrong I will go zoo.

Correct I will go to the zoo.

Both the preposition to and the article the are missing. In English, zoo is a countable noun and requires the definite article the when referring to a specific place. The absence of these elements makes the sentence grammatically incorrect and contextually unclear.

These errors support the argument by Tira Nur Fitria (2018), who emphasized that omission of articles and prepositions is common among beginner EFL learners because such elements are often absent in their native language structures.

Misformation Errors

Misformation occurs when students use the wrong form of a grammatical element. This may include incorrect auxiliary verbs, subject-verb agreement errors, or inappropriate verb forms. Ellis (2003) describes this as one of the most common types of grammatical errors during interlanguage development.

For Example

Wrong I am go to the Zoo tomorrow.

Correct I will go to the Zoo tomorrow.

The student used *am* instead of *will* as the auxiliary verb, *am* is part of the present continuous tense (*am going*), not the simple future. Using *am* with a base verb (*go*) is ungrammatical. This indicates that the student confused present and future tense structures.

For Example

Wrong She is buy a new bag next week.

Correct She will buy a new bag next week.

The student used *is* followed by a base verb *buy*, which is not a correct combination. In English, *is* must be followed by verb-ing (e.g., *is buying*) if present continuous is intended. However, the task requires simple future tense, which must be constructed as *will* + verb 1. This error reflects overgeneralization of the present continuous pattern.

For Example

Wrong We are going to playing basketball.

Correct We are going to play basketball.

The student used the -ing form *playing* instead of the base verb *play*. The structure *be going to* is followed by the base form of the verb, not the gerund. This mistake shows confusion between *going to* + verb 1 and *be* + verb-ing structures.

For Example

Wrong They is going to grandma next Sunday.

Correct They are going to grandma next Sunday.

Subject-verb disagreement. The plural subject *they* was paired with the singular auxiliary *is*. In English grammar, plural subjects must agree with plural verbs/auxiliaries. This indicates the student has not fully acquired subject-verb agreement rules.

These misformation errors show that students have partially internalized the rules of English future tense but are still applying them inaccurately. This confirms Ellis's (2003) argument that learners develop and test their own rules during the process of second language acquisition.

Addition Errors

Addition errors occur when students insert unnecessary or redundant grammatical elements into a sentence. These often arise from overgeneralization of learned patterns (Dulay et al., 1982).

For Example

Wrong..... I will to doctor.

Correct I will go to the doctor.

The student incorrectly added the preposition *to* directly after *will*, without including a verb. In future tense structure, *will* must be directly followed by a base verb (*go*), not a preposition or noun. The phrase “*will to doctor*” is grammatically incorrect and indicates that the student is attempting to replicate familiar phrases like *go to the doctor* without understanding the required verb form.

Addition errors, although less frequent, show that learners are trying to produce more complex sentences but do not yet have a clear grasp of how auxiliary verbs function in future tense structures.

The discussion of this study is based on the identification and classification of student errors found in their writing of simple future tense sentences. The analysis was conducted using the categorization of error types according to Ellis (2003) and Dulay, Burt, & Krashen (1982): omission, misformation, and addition. These types reflect both surface-level grammatical inaccuracies and deeper issues in the learners' interlanguage development. The results indicate that although sixth-grade students have been introduced to the basic structure of the simple future tense, their productive mastery remains limited. This is evident from their tendency to produce incomplete sentences (omission), incorrect grammatical structures (misformation), or insert unnecessary elements (addition). These findings align with the view of Harmer (2015), who notes that while recognition of grammar structures may occur early in learning, the accurate production of those forms often requires repeated exposure, contextual application, and feedback.

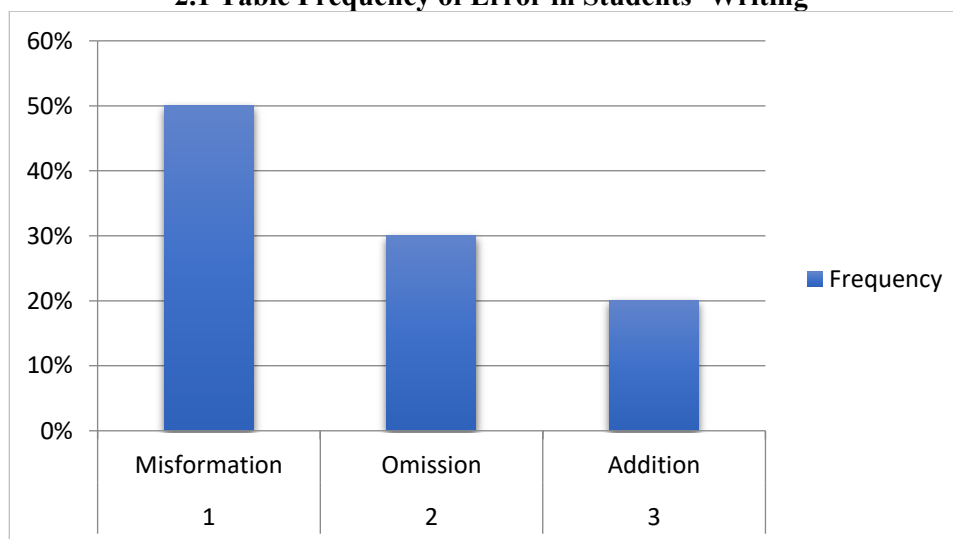
Omission errors refer to the absence of essential grammatical elements. In this study, students commonly omitted main verbs, prepositions, and articles, especially in sentences involving direction or location, such as “*I will school tomorrow*” – omission of the main verb *go*. “*I will go zoo*” and “*I will go school*” – missing preposition *to* and article *the*. As explained by Dulay et al. (1982), these types of errors occur when learners have not fully acquired grammatical morphemes, which are often subtle or

unstressed in spoken language. This is particularly relevant to Indonesian learners, as their first language does not use articles, increasing the likelihood of negative language transfer. James (2013) further supports this by stating that omission errors are common among early-stage learners due to lack of grammatical salience and awareness of obligatory elements in the target language.

Misformation errors were the most frequent in this study, comprising 50% of the total identified errors. These include the use of incorrect auxiliary verbs, incorrect verb forms, and subject-verb mismatches. Examples include: “I am go to the Zoo tomorrow” – confusion between present continuous and simple future. “She is buy a new bag...” – is incorrectly used with a base verb. “We are going to playing...” – playing used instead of play. “They is going...” – subject-verb disagreement. According to Ellis (2003), such errors are developmental, emerging as learners construct and test their own rules based on exposure and internal logic. These errors represent an active process within the learner's interlanguage, rather than mere carelessness. Richards and Schmidt (2013) note that misformation is a signal that learners are cognitively engaged in hypothesis-testing about grammar rules, albeit inaccurately. Similar patterns were reported by Rohmiyati & Fatoni (2024), who found that misformation was also the dominant error type in future tense compositions among junior high school students.

Addition errors involve the inclusion of unnecessary elements. In this study, the primary example was: “I will to doctor” – inappropriate insertion of the preposition to after will, without the verb go. This kind of error often stems from overgeneralization, where students apply a familiar pattern (e.g., go to the doctor) within an unrelated grammatical structure (e.g., will + verb). Erdoğan (2005) emphasizes that addition errors are frequent among learners who rely heavily on memorized patterns without fully understanding grammatical functions or syntactic positioning. Nunan (2003) also points out that errors like these can be attributed to the transition from controlled to creative language use, where students begin experimenting with output but lack sufficient grammatical accuracy.

2.1 Table Frequency of Error in Students' Writing



Based on the distribution of students' errors in the writing assignment, it can be concluded that the students produced errors in three main categories: **omission, misformation, and addition**. The analysis showed that students made **5 misformation errors (50%)**, **3 omission errors (30%)**, and **2 addition errors (20%)**. This indicates that **misformation was the most dominant type of error**, followed by omission and addition.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that sixth-grade students at the elementary level have limited mastery of the simple future tense, particularly in writing tasks that require them to produce complete sentences. While some students demonstrated partial understanding through multiple-choice items, most were unable to construct grammatically correct sentences using “will” or “be going to.”

The most common errors included incorrect verb forms, omission of auxiliary verbs, and confusion between future and present tense structures. These errors reflect a combination of linguistic, instructional, and psychological factors. Students may be memorizing grammar rules without fully understanding how to apply them in communication. A lack of exposure to English outside the classroom and limited opportunities for guided writing practice further contribute to these difficulties.

To address these challenges, it is recommended that teachers adopt more interactive and student-centered approaches in grammar instruction. Practice activities should go beyond fill-in-the-blank exercises and encourage students to write, speak, and use the target structures in context. With continued exposure, feedback, and support, students can gradually build the confidence and accuracy needed to use the simple future tense effectively.

REFERENCES

- Azar, B. S. (2003). *Understanding and Using English Grammar*. Pearson Education.
- Brown, H. D. (2015). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. Pearson Education.
- Ellis, R. (2003). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford University Press.
- Erito, S. N. P. (2023). Error Analysis in Short Dialogue Using Future Tense. *Applied Research on English Education*, 3(1), 45–52.
- Erdoğan, V. (2005). Contribution of Error Analysis to Foreign Language Teaching. *Mersin University Journal of the Faculty of Education*, 1(2), 261–270.
- Fatmawati, D. S., Aryni, Y., & Sari, P. L. P. (2022). An Error Analysis of Students in Writing on Simple Past Tense. *Jurnal Global Edukasi*, 1(1), 850. <https://jurnal.goretanpena.com/index.php/JGE/article/view/850>
- Fitria, T. N. (2018). Error Analysis Found in Students' Writing Composition of Simple Future Tense. *ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 1(3), 240–251. <https://doi.org/10.34050/els-jish.v1i3.5028>
- Harmer, J. (2015). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Pearson Education.
- Harefa, H. S., Telaumbanua, K. M. E., & Gea, Y. (2022). An Error Analysis of Using Simple Past Tense on Students' Writing Recount Text. *TEHUDE: Journal of English Language Education*, 1(1), 28–35. <https://ojs.unias.ac.id/index.php/tehude/article/view/92>
- James, C. (2013). *Errors in Language Learning and Use: Exploring Error Analysis*. Routledge.
- Knapp, P., & Watkins, M. (2005). *Genre, Text, Grammar: Technologies for Teaching and Assessing Writing*. UNSW Press.
- Leo, S. (2021). *A Challenging Book to Practice Teaching in English*. Penerbit Andi.
- Mayaratri, P. (2020). Analysis of Verb Tenses Errors of Non-English Students' Writing. *Lingua Scientia*, 12(1), 185–198. <https://doi.org/10.21274/ls.2020.12.1.185-198>
- Mukarromah, M., & Suryanto, B. T. (2022). Error Analysis on Students' Writing in Using Simple Present Tense. *International Journal of English Education and Linguistics (IJoEEL)*, 3(2), 3119. <https://doi.org/10.33650/ijoeel.v3i2.3119>
- Murphy, R. (2019). *English Grammar in Use*. Cambridge University Press.
- Nahak, Y. N., Sahan, A., & Seran, Y. (2022). An Error Analysis of EFL Students' Use of Simple Past Tense in Writing Narrative Text. *IJoEEL*, 6(2), 9644. <https://doi.org/10.33650/ijoeel.v6i2.9644>
- Pane, M. A. (2023). *Easy English Grammar*. Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta: CV Bintang Semesta Media.
- Richards, J. C., & Schmidt, R. (2013). *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*. Routledge.
- Rohmiyati, Y., & Fatoni, A. U. (2024). Error Analysis on the Use of Future Tense in Students' Writing Assignment. *EDULINK: Education and Linguistics Knowledge Journal*, 6(1), 8–12. <https://ejournal.uniskakediri.ac.id/index.php/EDULINK/article/view/4241>
- Sargeant, H. (2007). *Basic English Grammar: For English Language Learners*. Saddleback Educational Publishing.
- Setyaningrum, A. (2018). An Error Analysis in the Use of Simple Past Tense on Students' Final Work at IAIN Kudus. *Journal of English Teaching and Learning Issues (JETLI)*, 1(2), 50–87.

Simbolon, N., Simanjuntak, E. B., Simanjuntak, M. P., Simanjuntak, K. G., & Sinamarata, J. (2018). *Integrated English*. Bali: Jayapangus Press.

Willis, J. (2021). *A Framework for Task-Based Learning*. Intrinsic Books Ltd.