



University of Zawia

Faculty of Arts

Department of English

**Investigating Students' Problems in Narrative Essays
Writing: A Focus on Misuse of Tenses**

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements of
Master's Degree in Applied Linguistics

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Abstract

This study investigated the students' problems in narrative essay writing, specifically in using tenses. The study aimed at investigating the misuse of tense in narrative essays by EFL students in the University of Zawia. It also aimed at finding out the reasons that lead to the occurrence of tense-related errors in students' writing, especially narrative essays. In narrative essays, students are generally expected to master different grammar forms and verb tenses as one of these forms that are considered a challenge in writing. Using tenses properly in writing would result in logical flow of ideas and a connection of events. That is why the misuse of tenses was the major concern of this study.

To answer the research questions, the researcher used a writing test and an interview. The test was administered to 40 students studying English in the College of Education, while the interview was conducted with only five students chosen from those who responded to the test and their writing revealed a lot of errors.

Generally, the results showed that the main reasons behind the students' misuse of tenses were intralingual and interlingual factors. This study recommended that teachers provide more focused instruction on tense usage, and that students be given regular practice in narrative writing to minimize such errors.

Declaration

My name is Sundus Abdalhamid Alahresh and I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Zawia and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint award of this degree.

Dedication

To my parents

To my husband and kids

To my brother Dr Husam

Acknowledgments

All praise is due to Allah, whose guidance, mercy, and blessings have made the completion of this work possible.

I am deeply grateful for the invaluable knowledge, support, and encouragement I have received from my supervisor Dr Fahima who has guided me throughout this academic journey.

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List of Abbreviations

SLA : Second Language Acquisition

EA : Error Analysis

L2 : Second Language

FL : Foreign Language

TL : Target Language

ESL : English as a Second Language

EFL : English as a Foreign Language

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This study investigates the use of tenses in narrative essays by students of English in the College of Education at the University of Zawia. The study specifically focused on the misuse of the simple tense in narrative essays. This chapter presents an overview about the study including a general background about the main topic under investigation, specifically misuse of tenses in narrative essays. It also states the problem of the study along with the research questions. This chapter also introduces the objectives of the study and identifies the limitation and the scope of the study. It spots the light on the significance of the study to the students and teachers. The chapter is concluded with a tentative summary of the structure of the thesis.

1.1 General Background

Writing is one of the skills that should be mastered by the students in learning English. Essay writing is another task that needs the mastery of vocabulary and tense. In fact, many studies showed that most students have problems in writing a good essay in English. The students' scores in writing are low, and only some of them get good ones. According to research, this may be caused by some factors; the first is the rare opportunity to use English due to the status of English as a foreign language in Arabic contexts such as Libya. A second factor is related to the fact that students do not have enough practice in writing essays. So, these students may make mistakes in determining the main idea, using the suitable tense, and arranging the sentences. Therefore, the students need to master the structure of the English language which requires enough vocabulary and knowledge of tenses. Among the student's difficulties in writing is using tenses improperly. Time and tense are importantly interwoven in the structure of a language; however, the two terms must not be confused. The term time is a concept which all human beings are familiar with. It is divided into past, present and future. It is

a thing that is independent of language. The term tense, on the other side of the coin, stands for a verb or a series of verb forms used to express time relation.

Tenses in general may indicate an action or activity or may state the past, present or future. According to Cowan (2008, p. 350), tense is related to time, and time refers to when an action takes place. It expresses the time that an action occurs in relation to the moment of speaking. Salaberry & Shirai (2002, p. 2) posit that tense is a deictic category that places a situation in time with respect to some other time, usually moment of speech. Tense has three dimensions: present, past, and future. Therefore, there are variations in tenses in the English language tense system; therefore, these variations create problems in use. The misuse of tense could be attributed to language interference and language transfer. A study of tense errors of the students' written English essays is expected to provide this kind of findings, and to also find out the types of tense errors committed by students in various examinations. Most students do not understand tense and aspect. This reflects in every aspect of their work in the classroom. In his research work, Abudu (2009) stated that in the acquisition of any skills, practice and frequency are the very important determinants as far as the successful understanding and the use of the skill is concerned. It is assumed that it is because students have not acquired the rules governing this grammar items adequately, they are unable to communicate properly using tense and aspect. This is shown in any form of their communication whether in their writing or conversation, which show problems in the use of tense, aspect and inflection associated with the subject verb agreement (concord).

Students' inability to use tense and aspect effectively pose a lot of problems in our educational system. Their problems for not using tense and aspect effectively leads to poor performance in other core subjects which need to be addressed by the English language teachers all over the country. Plotnik (2003) discusses the effect of tense stating that every narrative has a base tense, one that moves the action of the communication forward. The use of the tense establishes the mood for the conversation or the story being told. For instance, the past tense is traditionally the story teller's medium, in which events have taken place and people have acted out their destinies. There is a finite basis to expired time. Present tense, on the other hand, promote feeling or mood of immediacy and the potential for change or flexibility (Downing & Lockes, 2006).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite learning English for several years, most learners of English, especially at the university level, commit tense errors when speaking and writing. Based on the researcher's experience as a trainee teacher at Zawia University, College of Education, Department of English, students find writing very difficult and boring; thus, teachers also find it hard to teach writing. This study sets out to study the misuse of tenses in essays writing by third semester students who are studying in the College of Education.

1.3 Research Questions

The study aims to find out the answers to these research questions:

1. What types of errors do third semester EFL students commonly make in using tenses in narrative essays?
2. What are the main causes of tense errors made by third-year EFL students in narrative essay writing?

1.4 Aims of the Study

The main aim of this study is to explore the difficulties that face the students when using tenses in writing narrative essay. The study also aims to achieve these objectives:

1. To investigate the causes of tense misuse and aspect by the students.
2. To come out with useful suggestions that may help students use tense and aspect effectively.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to be beneficial for the English Department students and the lecturers. First of all, the English Department students will be helped in writing narrative essay. Second, this study supports lecturers in teaching narrative essay. Third this study can be used as a reference for other researchers who are interested in conducting similar studies. This study enhances students' academic performance in all subject areas and their general life as a whole since they turn to be good communicators and writers. That is, it improves students' grammatical competency and accuracy in

their articulation and build upon their proficiency in the English language. Finally, it motivates teachers to adopt new ways of teaching grammar especially tense and aspect.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study was delimited to third semester students in the department of English, College of Education. The idea was that they are more experienced in terms of writing. In the same vein, students at this stage are expected to have been taught tenses and their usage. As such, it may help the present study to test learners' ability to use the English tenses in their written essays, by presenting essay questions to assess if the students are able to utilize tenses effectively in their written English essays. The generalization of the findings of the study is limited to tense in English grammar. The success of this study depends on several factors related to the researcher, research site and research population among others. The study was conducted in the college of education during the academic year 2024/2025 with third semester students.

1.7 Methodology

The primary focus of the study is to identify various types of writing problems experienced by students, and also to understand the reasons behind such problems encountered by third semester students in writing a narrative essay. In this research, a 60-minute test given to 30 students. Based on the research questions, the study applied a mixed method approach (qualitative methods and quantitative methods). The qualitative methods included an interview with 5 students and the quantitative methods included the frequencies of errors appeared in the writing test. The population of this study was the third semester of the English Department at the College of Education where the students are taking their writing class. The study instruments in this study were writing narrative essays and an interview. In a writing test, participants were asked to choose a topic to write a narrative essay. A pilot study was conducted in the Department of English; College of Education determine the validity and reliability of the instruments used in the study. The interview was conducted to elicit information about the first research question related to the students' problems in writing narrative essays correctly. In this phase of data analysis, document analysis of narrative essays was carried out to explore students' skills in writing by looking at tense usage.

1.8 Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters; they are:

- Chapter one, Introduction, introduces the introduction with all its elements; general background, statement of the problem, and research questions, aims of the study, significance of the study, an overview on the methodology and the structure of the thesis.
- Chapter two presents a review of related literature and previous studies. This chapter review some major topics related to the use of tenses in writing specifically present tense and past tense. It also discusses the difficulties that face learners in suing tense. The chapter spots the light on error analysis as it is the framework of the study along with types of errors and categories of errors. The chapter is concluded with an explanation of some previous studies.
- Chapter three, Methodology, discusses research design, participants and instruments of data collection.
- Chapter four, introduces the methods of data collection and it gives a description of the results and the analysis of the interview. It summarizes the most significant results of both instruments.
- Chapter five includes the discussion in which the researcher presents the discussion of the results supported with previous studies.
- Chapter six is the conclusion with ends the thesis with a general overview of the study. It also gives some recommendations to teachers and students of English.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews related literature on students' problems in writing essays generally, and in using tenses in narration essays specifically. It explains the English tenses in details showing their definitions and the reasons behind making mistakes when using them. This chapter presents narrative essay and its structure. In addition, it reviews error analysis and the types and categories of errors. There is also a spot on the difficulties that face learners in essay writing and the causes behind the students' misuse of errors.

2.1 English Tenses

As we grow in the society language also grows; we add and we remove for the purpose of making it simple for every human being. Most languages have rules governing them if not all of them. Crystal (2004) asserts that grammar is the structural foundation of our ability to express ourselves. The more we are aware of how it works, the more we can monitor the meaning and effectiveness of the way we and others use language. Maugham (1938) says that it is necessary for one to know grammar, and it is better to write grammatically than not, but it is well to remember that grammar is how common speech formulated. Grammar represents the principles of the language, the study of the forms of speech, and their relation to one another. It is concerned with the right use and the application of the rules of the language in speaking and writing. It is well established that it is a matter of applying rules and principles and the same principles apply to tense and aspect. According to Quirk et al (1985, p. 27), "many people see grammar as the form of structure". This includes the ordering of words, the correct addition of suffixes and prefixes and then the correct use of the articles. Wiredu (1998, p. 1) said that "grammar deals with how words in a language combine to form correct sentences in that language". He added in a language; words combine with other words based on what we do with these combinations.

According to Downing and Lockes (2006), tense is the grammatical expression that is used to describe how words are linked to form a particular location of events in time. It anchors ‘grounds’ an event to the speaker’s experience of the world by relating the event time to a point of reference. The normal universal and, therefore, unmarked point of reference at the moment of speaking – speech time, and what has been called the inescapable and constantly changing “now” in which verbal interaction takes places. Past events take place before the “now” while future events are thought of as taking place after it. The location of the speaker, the moment of speaking and the speaker himself /herself make up the “I” the here and now – ‘the deistic centre’ – which serves as the point of reference for definiteness and proximity. Tense, therefore, has a deistic function; it distinguishes a “proximal” event expressed by the present tense from a “distal” event expressed by the past tense. Tense is a grammatical category that is realized in English morphologically on the verb.

According to Downing and Lockes (2006), English language has only two tenses, the present and the past as in 'goes/went' respectively. English has no verbal inflexion to mark a future tense. The forms ‘shall’ and ‘will’ are not verbal inflections but modal auxiliaries which, when reduced, are attached to pronouns not to the verb root (he will wait there). Also, it is important to bear in mind the form-meaning relationship. Shall and will belong to a set of modal auxiliaries and can express meanings other than reference to future tense, English makes use of a number of combinations such as “be going” to refer to future events. Compare the sentences below:

- a. They do the shopping on Fridays (present tense)
- b. They did the shopping on Fridays (past tense).
- c. They are going to do/ will do the shopping on Fridays (lexical auxiliary/modal).

In general, as these examples illustrate, past and present events indicate a status of real event, while reference to the future indicates potential unreal events.

2.1.1 Definition of Tenses

According to Wiredu (1998), the term tense refers to the form a verb takes in order to

show whether the action took place in the past, or the action is taking place in present, or it will take place in the future. Green (1993) Define tense with respect to time. Time is a universal, non-linguistic concept with three divisions past, present and future. By tense, we understand the correspondence between the form of the verb and the concept of time. Aspect concerns the manner in which the verb is experienced. According to Annan (2014), tense is a category used in the grammatical description of verbs (along with aspect and mood), referring primarily to the way the grammar marks the time at which the action denoted by the verb took place. The actions which verbs express may take place at different times in relation to the time of speaking or writing – in the present, in the past, or in the future. In English, an expression such as *I dance, they dance, she dances*, indicates present time action, and another such as *I danced, they danced, she danced*, indicates past time action. This means that the grammatical category of tense is related to real-world time. Some grammarians believe that tense must always be shown by the actual form of the verb; and in many languages, present, past and future are indicated by changes in the verb forms.

The use of the tense and aspect establishes the mood for the conversation of the story being told: past tense is traditionally the story teller's medium, in which events have taken place and people have acted out their destinies. There is a finite basis to expired time. Present tense, on the other hand, promotes a feeling or mood of immediacy and the potential for a change or flexibility. Huddleston (1984) noted that past time is an inherently relational concept: the past tense inflection indicates that the time in which the situation or event took place is part in a relationship to another time, usually at the sentence said. The time of the situation in the present tense will normally be present or future, and may also be expressed in temporal terms, using a subordinate clause such as 'when he comes here, I will be talking to him', which tells future; subordinate change is restricted to cases when the future situation in which the predicted event will take place is assured. Huddleston uses the example "she is ill next week" as a non sensical misuse of the present tense as opposed to the action verb in "we leave for Somanya next week". This example shows how incorrect usage of past and present tense can not only impair communication and understanding but have the potential to affect "face" of the speaker/ writers in social and work setting/ place as well. Mudambathayu (2002) holds the view that there are two main tenses in English, the past and the present. According to him, there is no future tense in English. Instead, there are several ways for destiny future

time. Futurity, modality, and aspect according to him, are closely related to future time, which is rendered by means of modal auxiliaries or semi- auxiliaries or simple present forms or progressive forms. Wiredu (1998) indicates that there are four means of expressing future activities in English. According to him, the major ways of expressing future activities are:

- a. the use of modal auxiliaries.
- b. the simple present.
- c. the use of be going to.
- d. the present continuous.

There are two main tenses in English as Wiredu (1998) holds. These are the present and the past. Gere Ruggles (1985, p. 428) also holds the view that in English there are only two tenses, the present- and the past tense. This scholar of English emphasizes that although verbs have only two inflections, there are other means for conveying complex time relationship. They include adverbs that signal time, for example, the man comes tomorrow. The time of the verb is obviously in the future though we do not have future tense.

Also, when certain auxiliaries like will, shall and might. Example: The Ngmayemi festival will take off next week precede a main verb, they suggest future actions. Forlini et al (1987, p. 164) state that a tense tells us whether a verb is in the present, past or future. Bergman and Senn (1990, p. 168) said, tense is the form that shows time. According to these scholars there are six tenses: present, past, future, present perfect, past perfect and future perfect tense. These scholars do suggest that there are at least more than two types of tense in English. Most of the scholars define tense in relation with time. Thakur (2006:67) holds the view that tense is a grammatical category and perhaps time is non-grammatical concept. He said that tense refers to a certain type of classification of verb forms in any language but time is the passing of days, weeks, months and years. We understand time to be in the present, past and in the future; that is how everybody in this planet believes about time. However, tense forms do differ from one language to another. According to the way they believe and see time. Downing and Lockes (2010) explain that both tense and aspect have to do with time relations

expressed by the verb, but from different perspective. While basically a situation and an event or a state are in present or past time, aspect is concerned with such notions and duration and completion or incompleteness of the process expressed by the verb. According to these scholars, English has two aspects; they are the: perfect and the progressive. Also, Downing and Lockes gave the following representations of a situation.

1. He locked the safe.

2. He was locking the safe.

Tense is used to locate events in time; aspect is concerned with the way in which the event is viewed with regards to such consideration as duration and completion when encoded by a verb (Downing & Lockes, 2010).

2.1.2 Reasons behind Misuse of Tenses

Tense is an exclusive property of the verb. It is a term used in grammar to indicate the time an action or event is said to have happened or occurred. Hence, tense basically refers to time. Cowan (2008) explains that tense expresses the time that an action occurs in relation to the moment of speaking.

Tense has three “dimensions” present, past, and future (p. 350). For example,

- i) Jane loves Peter. (Present tense)
- ii) Jane loved Peter. (Past tense)
- iii) Jane will love Peter. (Expressing future time)

According to Cowan (2008) ‘use of verb forms is one of the two or three most difficult areas for English language learners to master’ (p. 350). As a result of this, the learners sometimes make mistakes in the proper use of verb forms as they attempt to express the time an event that took place in the target language being learnt, which is the English Language. There are numerous reasons for the incorrect use of English tenses by learners and users of English language especially in a second language situation where the learners have previously mastered a first language known as the mother tongue (MT). This is referred to as the mother tongue interference in the target language (TL). As a result, learners or users of English as a second language (L2) tend to have so many problems, like the problem of overgeneralization, gravitational pull of the first language

(L1), internal analogy, pronunciation according to spelling, poor learning, exposure to non-standard variety of English used outside the classroom (e.g. pidgin), lack of adequate vocabulary to express concepts, ideas and the culture gap of the two systems.

Language scholars and linguists all over the world have been theorizing on the impact of L1 (first language) interference on L2 (second language). Two basic models have arisen, namely positive and negative interference. However, much attention is being given to negative interference. This is because it is the aspect which has negative impact on second language (L2) learners of any language. In fact, negative L1 transfer effect on L2 is considered as the influence resulting from the differences between the target language and the second language. Such view of language transfer may be too simplistic and restrictive. It should be stated here that both empirical and teaching experiences have shown that teaching L1 and L2 differences do not necessarily imply learner's difficulties. This invariably means that not all errors made or committed by learners are attributable to negative transfer of L1 features to the L2 being acquired.

Another reason for errors could be the lack of mastery of the target language, which in turn affects the correct use of tenses among students who acquired English as their second language. Reacting to this, Jowitt (1991), rather than tagging this as transfer, He gives priority to the claim that the second language learner is just being monolingual and lacks competence to adapt to the appropriate usage of the grammatical features of the target language. He states that the learner does not only affect a restructuring of the complex system of his mother tongue in order to learn the equally complex system of the target language nor are his 'errors' solely due to transfer (or interference) of mother tongue features (p. 35). Thus, once the first language is acquired, the sound system, grammar and structure of the second language become tasking for the learner or speaker to acquire because the L1 features have been internalized by the learner. Agreeing to this, Eka and Udofot (1996) says that unless one makes an extra effort to study the grammatical structure or the system of the target language (English), errors and incompetence would always manifest in ones sentences as regards the misuse of English tenses (Pg. 52).

Furthermore, Carl James (1980) in his Contrastive Analysis theory states that contractive analysis predicts errors by comparing the linguistic systems of the mother tongue and the target language. It is based on the assumption that second language

learners will tend to transfer to the second language utterances, the formal features of their first language. He continued that “individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture” (p. 22). However, Jowitt (1991) does not believe that errors are made as a result of mother tongue interference alone. Thus, he asserts, it is legitimate to speak of varieties as ‘errors’ where they are due to wrong learning and are generally regarded by educated people as errors. To be more specific, some errors might be attributed to be mother tongue transfer (I hear the smell of gas) or to transfer from pidgin (I for tell you that...), others to false hypothesis or overgeneralization (I am go...), and others to failure to learn the special phonic or syntactic features of certain words (she deals on cloth). (p. 36). He goes further to make an important distinction between idiosyncratic errors and common errors and subdivides common errors into what he calls “vulgar and institutionalized errors”.

Idiosyncratic errors are those peculiar to individual characterizing idiosyncratic dialects which are likely to be identified and corrected by teachers, peers, older children, parents and so on. However, these idiosyncratic features are stigmatized by the average non-native users of English community because they impede communication but they tend to be eliminated at relatively early stages of the learning process and have less chance of being fossilized. In contrast, common errors are those occurring in the written and spoken English of large numbers of learners. The subset called vulgar errors are those which show ignorance of fairly elementary rules of syntax, morphology and spelling errors. Also, institutionalized errors are common errors which are not identified as errors except by native users or by the most highly educated and experienced users of English within the wider class of the educated. Such errors occur with the breaking of the rules of more advanced syntax (e.g., the pluralization of uncountable nouns, misuse of tenses) or of phonology. Worthy of mention is the contribution of Kenneth Beare (1996) on the misuse of tense in the use of English in a second language situation. He stated,

I’d definitely agree that tense use is one of the most common mistakes that learners make. However, that doesn’t impede communication. Often, listeners can fill in the clues contextually. Certainly, learners should strive to improve their tense usage but one of the best ways to do that is to communicate in

English as often as possible. The tense eventually begins to sort themselves out after many, many mistakes are made (p. 33).

The above assertion reaffirms the fact that the correct use of tenses constitutes a major problem for a person who is learning English as a second language (L2) and a conscious effort should be made to learn English tenses so that with time, correct usage can be attained even if incorrect use does not necessarily hinder communication.

2.1.3 Narrative Essay

Narrative is a piece of text that tells a story and, in doing so, entertains or informs the reader or listener (Karolina, 2006, p. 25). Narrative is a text type which tells a story in which people encounter a problem or crisis that they need to overcome – it shows how people or groups of people overcome a problem or crisis in their lives (Emilia, 2010, p. 135). Narrative is to tell a story or tale that orderly account of events in speech or writing (Hornby, 1974, p. 561). According to Silviana (2008, p. 2), narrative is a form of discourse which attempts to narrate an event or events that it seems as if the reader sees or experience the events. Narrative is one of the most powerful ways of communicating with others. A good written story lets your reader response to some event in your life as if it were their own; they not only understand the event, but they can almost feel it. The action, details, and dialogue put the readers see and make it happen for them (Intan, 2006, p. 25).

The mastery of narrative essay writing is a crucial component of language education, particularly for students whose primary language is not English. These essays serve not only as a medium for academic evaluation but also as a vital practice in articulating personal narratives and developing linguistic fluency. This study is particularly concerned with the frequent challenges students face in the proper use of tenses, a fundamental aspect of writing that significantly affects clarity and coherence in narrative essays. Addressing this issue, the literature review explores various facets of writing as a skill and art, underscoring the intellectual activities involved in writing coherent and engaging texts. It further delves into the specific difficulties students encounter with tense usage, drawing insights from contemporary research to illuminate the widespread nature of these challenges. This introduction sets the stage for a detailed examination of educational strategies that can potentially enhance narrative essay

writing skills among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, with a particular focus on the effective use of tenses.

A narrative essay accomplishes a goal by telling a story, engaging the reader, and conveying a message. A narrative text tells a story by representing a sequence of events. Narrative can be a dominant pattern in many types of formal writing, such as history, biography, autobiography, and journalism as well as less formal such as personal letters and entries in diaries and journals. Narrative text is also an essential part of casual conversation, and it may dominate tell tales, speeches and shaggy dog stories, as well as news and the feature stories presented on television. Keraf (2001) states that the narrative text as a story tells or describes an action in the past time clearly.

Furthermore, Gutierrez et al. (2015) defined narrative essay as "comprehension and expression of our experience over time which can be found in every setting of human interaction" (p. 45). In addition, narrative text also deals with problematic events which lead to a crisis or turning points of a certain kind, which in turn leads to a resolution. Based on the definition above, narrative text is a description of a series of events, either real or imaginary, that is written or told in order to entertain people. This type of text structurally organizes the action, thought, and interactions of its characters into a pattern of plot. In short, any time you "tell what happened" you are using narrative text. Although a narrative text may be written for its own sake; that is simply to recount events. In most college writing narrative text is used for purpose, and a sequence of events is presented to prove a point.

2.2 Types of Narrative Essays

According to Emilia (2010), there are two types of narrative essay; non-fiction and fiction. Non-fiction is a kind of narrative writing that tells the true story. It is often used to recount a person's life story, important historical event, or news stories. This is really a combination of narrative and informational writing. Meanwhile, fiction is a kind of narrative that tells the untrue story. The story made up by the writer such as short stories, comics, novels, etc. The main purpose of this fiction is to amuse, or sometimes to teach moral lessons. Narrative can be imaginary or factual. Anderson Romli (2014, p. 20) describe many different types of narrative; namely humour, romance, crime, real life fiction, historical fiction, mystery, fantasy, science fiction, diary novel, and

adventure. According to Karolina (2006, p. 29). there are many different types of narrative texts such as the following:

- 1) **Humor:** A humorous narrative is one that aims to make audience laugh as a part of telling story.
- 2) **Mystery:** The mystery genre is a type of fiction in which a detective (or other professional) solves a crime or a series of crimes.
- 3) **Romance:** The romance narrative typically tells a story of two lovers who overcome difficulties to end up together.
- 4) **Fantasy:** The fantasy genre is a type of fiction that commonly uses magic and other supernatural phenomena as a primary plot, element, theme, or setting.
- 5) **Crime:** Crime is a genre of fiction that deals with crimes, detection and motives.
- 6) **Science Fiction:** Science fiction narratives are those whose setting involves science and technology.
- 7) **Diary Novels:** This type of narrative has the text presented like diary entries.
- 8) **Adventure:** Adventure is a genre of fiction in which an adventure, an exciting undertaking involving risk and physical danger, forms the main storyline.

All these types of course are built grammatically in tense and each type of the two needs a certain type of tense. Students should be taught when to use present tense and past tense when writing narrative essay.

2.3 Structure of Narrative Texts

The generic structures of narrative texts are orientation, complication, sequence of events, resolution, and Coda. A more detailed generic structure of narrative text has been proposed by Romli (2014, p. 21) who argue that a narrative text includes the following:

- 1) Orientation that sets the scene (when and where) and introduces participants/characters (who).
- 2) Complication where a crisis arises and something happened unexpectedly.

- 3) Resolution when the crisis is resolved in which the characters finally sort out the complication.
- 4) A coda which is the closing to the narrative (an optional step).

According to Emilia (2010, p. 135), all Narratives must have an orientation, and complication with an evaluation and a resolution. Those structures are the main things in the narrative schematic structure and only sometimes the narratives are given a coda. More completely, here is the function of structures in a narrative. According to Emilia (2010, p. 105), the function of each schematic structure in narrative text is as follows:

1) Orientation:

- (1) Introduces the characters and sparks the reader's interest in the characters.
- (2) Tells the reader when, where, who, what and why.
- (3) Give a hint about the problems which the characters will encounter.

2) Complication:

- (1) Is where something happens which the characters do not expect
- (2) Is where the reader discovers the problem

3) Evaluation:

- (1) Which can occur as a separate stage but is also woven into the complication
- (2) Is where the story teller comments on the events and makes them significant for the reader
- (3) Makes the reader care about what happens to the characters
- (4) Slows the action down and creates suspense which makes the reader want to find out what happens next

4) Resolution: Is where the problem is solved.

5) Coda: Rounds off the story with a short comment on what happened or with a comment about the future lives of the characters. For example, many fairy tales have a coda such as "And they lived happily ever after."

The structure of a narrative essay is distinctly organized in a chronological sequence that builds upon sequential events rather than main ideas and supporting details. This structure typically includes an introduction that sets the stage for the story, followed by body paragraphs that develop the plot through rising action, climax, and resolution, and concludes with a reflective conclusion. The plot and setting are critical elements in this structure, as they help in organizing the essay and creating the mood necessary for engaging the reader. This method enhances students' language, organizational, and critical thinking skills by embedding elements of fiction into the essay-writing process.

Like other genres, narratives also have linguistic features, these linguistic features can be listed as follows (Emilia, 2010, p. 136):

1. It sequences in time, and this is signaled by a range of time connectives: once upon a time, after a while, first, then.
2. It uses the past tense.
3. It uses many action verbs which express material processes that describe what happens: blew, wrapped, shone, exhausted
4. It contains dialogues and uses a number of "saying verbs" (verbal processes), such as: said, asked, and replied. Sometimes these saying verbs also indicate how something is said. For example, instead of writing "He said "What is that?" one might say: "He whispered "What is that?"
5. Many Narratives also use thinking verbs that gives us information about what participants are thinking or feeling, such as wondered, remembered, thought, felt, disliked.
6. Narratives use descriptive language to describe people and things: bitterly cold day, long, thick, warm coat, cold North Wind, gentle Sun and to describe how actions occur: easily, harder, tightly, and warmly.

Dini (2013, p. 17) also suggests that narratives have some linguistic features such as the following:

1. Specific often individual participants with defined identities. Major participants are human, or sometimes animals with human characteristic.
2. Mainly use action verbs (material processes), that describe what happens.
3. Many narratives also use thinking verbs (mental processes) that gives us

information about what participants are thinking or feeling, such as wondered, remembered, thought, felt, disliked.

4. Normally use past tense
5. Dialogue often includes and uses a number of saying verbs (verbal process) such as said, asked, and replied. The tense may change to the present or future in the dialogue. Sometimes these saying verbs also indicate how something is said.
6. Descriptive language is used to enhance and develop the story by creating image in the reader's mind.
7. Can be written in the first person (I, We) or third person (he, she, they). (In choose- your-own-adventures, the reader is involved in the story as a major character and addressed as "you".)

From a linguistic point of view, the structure of a narrative essay is basically built on the type of tense used.

It is important that students be aware of tense when starting essays.

2.4 Error Analysis (EA)

Error analysis (EA) involves a systematic description and classification of L2 errors detected in samples of learner's speech or writing. It is considered as the most appropriate tool for analyzing learners' errors. Within SLA, EA was first introduced by Stephen Pit Corder and his colleagues in the late 1970s and became a very popular approach for describing L2 errors (James, 1998). In 1967, Corder argued that L2 errors are significant because they can reflect some of the underlying linguistic rules. The main focus of EA is the actual mistakes made by FL/L2 learners which lately became very popular in the field of applied linguistics. Brown (1994) argued that EA has a great value in classroom research. In fact, the systematic analysis of mistakes made by FL/L2 learners allows determining areas which require reinforcement in teaching.

EA was defined by James (1998) as "the process of determining the incidence, nature, causes and consequences of unsuccessful language" (p. 111). In addition, Mahmoodzadeh (2012) defined EA as "a procedure used to identify, categorize, and explain the errors committed by FL/L2 learners" (p. 75). According to EA, a great deal of errors made by FL learners are similar regardless of their native languages. Such errors are mainly caused by intralingual interference or transfer. James (1998) claimed

that such a type of interference from the structures of the target language (TL) itself is the main cause of intralingual errors. Based on this assumption, EA serves two main purposes: first, it provides insights about the types of interferences found in second language learners' performances; second, it informs teachers and syllabus designers about the most problematic aspects of the TL that students face difficulty producing (Dulay et al., 1982). According to Corder (1981), there are two main objectives of EA: one theoretical and the other is applied. The theoretical objective aims to check the validity of the theories such as the theory of transfer. In other words, this objective can help in understanding how and what a foreign language (FL) learner learns whilst studying a FL. On the other hand, the applied objective "concerns pedagogical purposes" (Mahmoodzadeh, 2012, p. 735). This objective enables learners of L2 to learn their TL more efficiently and effectively by using their previous linguistic knowledge for pedagogical purposes.

In sum, the identification of FL/SL learners' errors and the problems they encounter help EFL/ESL teachers pinpoint their students' weaknesses and then revise their teaching practices and learning materials accordingly.

2.4.1 Sources of Error

There are two sources of errors according to Richards, et al (2002), namely interlingual errors and intralingual errors.

a) Interlingual Errors

Interlingual errors are the errors caused by the interference of native language (mother language) of the learners (Richards, et al, 2002). Interlingual errors here refer to second language errors that reflect native language structure. It reflects native language structure regardless of the internal process or external conditions that spawned them, e.g., The man skinny. This interlingual error should be "The man is skinny". This sentence is caused by interference of native language sentence (Rajul Naheef رجل نحيف).

b) Intralingual Errors

According to Richards, et al (2002), intralingual errors occur when learners do not master well the language learned or they lack target language knowledge. It is distinguished into three types:

1. Overgeneralization, in which the errors arise when the learner creates a deviant structure on the basis of other structures in the target language.
2. Ignorance of Rule Restrictions, in which the errors involve the application of rules to contexts where they do not apply. The learners of the second language do not obey the structure of the target language
3. Incomplete Application of Rules, in which the learners' errors are derived from the faulty comprehension of distinction in the target language involving a failure to fully develop a structure. Some second language (English) learners tend to apply for declarative word order in questions in place of interrogative word order, as in you are a student?

The knowledge of the error resource is a good basis for both the teacher and the learner to deal with the error. Harmer (2007, p. 96) says that students learn more about their target language when they realize the source of their errors. Brown (2007, p. 263) claims that before the learner acquires the TL system, the L1 linguistic system is the only way that leads the learners to draw conclusions (interlingual errors). However, Richards (1970, p. 2-3) claims that other errors can be noticed while acquiring L2 which do not reflect the L1, for example: did he ated, what you are doing. These errors may be called interlingual and the definition of the developmental errors is a type of errors that indicate the learner's overwhelming knowledge at specific points and situations in some of language acquisition characteristics.

a. Language Transfer

It is the main factor of error of the learners who learn English as a foreign language. Language transfer happens when the learners contrast the linguistic system between a mother tongue and a target language. In this stage, the learners are in the limited proficient knowledge of the foreign language. Thus, when they try to write sentences in English, they will transfer the sentence pattern based on their first language (Rustipa, 2011). Olsen (1999 as cited in Watcharapunyawong & Usaha 2013) stated that some of the learners who learn English as a foreign language could not write the sentences correctly due to the inadequate competence in the syntactic and lexical aspects of the language. Therefore, they still face difficulty in English writing due to the inadequate knowledge of English and the differences between the system of mother tongue and the

language they are trying to learn. Thus, when learners write sentences, they would commit errors because of these difficulties.

Moreover, language transfer is also called interlingual transfer (Richard, 1984). Horning (1987) stated, "It may occur at different levels such as transfer of phonological, morphological, grammatical and lexical-semantic elements of the native language into the target language". The language transfer happens when the learners translate the word based on their first language into the target language (Horning, 1987). Additionally, Chelli (2014 as cited in Afifuddin, 2016) argues that the influence of the learners' mother tongue in learning English as their foreign language, is called interlanguage transfer. Thus, interlingual transfer is caused by the influence of learners' first language. Moreover, Muhsin (2016) stated that before the learners highly master the concept of the language, they always use the concept of their mother tongue. In addition, Horning (1987) also stated that the interlanguage error occurs when the learners attempt to produce a sentence in the new language, but because of the differences between the new and old language, they would commit the errors. The learners commonly use the rule of their mother tongue into English when they write in English. But in fact, they used their first language rule, so it would contain the interference (Bram, 1995). Learning language is a problem of habit formation and a set of habit. So, when the learners try to learn a new habit or a new language, the old habit will influence the new habit. It is called 'mother tongue interference'. It happens when the learners express their ideas in English writing, they do not know what is appropriate structure in that language, and they will go back to the first language system which is familiar to them (Norrish, 1983). Thus, in this condition, the interlingual transfer may result from transfer from the first language into the target language.

b. Intralingual Interference

James (1998 as cited in Affifuddin 2016) maintains that intralingual transfer occurs due to the inadequacy of learners' competence in English. The learner merely applies what they know in English. In addition, Richard (1984) stated that intralingual interference refers to items produced by the learners, which reflect not the structure of mother tongue, but generalization based on partial exposure to the target language. For example, the students might write mans instead of saying men as the plural form of man. In that way, the learners overgeneralize the use of suffixes for the plural nouns

(Affifuddin, 2016). Thus, this factor causes the errors because the learner do not know English very well. Moreover, intralingual errors result from partial learning of language (Ratnah, 2013). For the intralingual interference, the errors are caused by the influence of the target language rather than language transfer. In this case, the students have obtained some rules in English, but the rules still confusing them since these rules have exceptions, which the learners need to understand whether the rules are necessary to be used or not (Kaweera, 2013). Thus, the learners need to learn more about the rules of English in order to make them understand well and minimize the errors.

2.4.2 The Concept of Errors

In learning the target language, most learners will make errors. Error is a common thing that happens in the process of teaching and learning a language. Hedge (2000) stated that the error is an unavoidable part of language learning. In addition, Hedge (2000) claimed that “Error is now seen as reflections of learner’s stage of interlanguage development”. Therefore, the error is one of the inescapable processes that shows the event phase in learning the interlanguage. Moreover, Norrish (1983) argued that error is regarded as the important part of learning language. Thus, the error is significant in that it shows the part or the stage of students' competence in learning the language.

In addition, according to Larsen-freeman and Micheal (1991), an error is a noticeable deviation which will reflect various stages of the learners’ competence in learning the language. Errors may appear when students do not acquire the rule of the foreign language. Furthermore, through the error, the progress of learning a language for the learner would be seen clearly, so that the teacher might improve teaching and learning the language better especially in writing. Norrish (1983) argued that error is the systematic deviation, and that the learners’ faults happened when they did not learn something yet. So, the learners who learned English as a foreign language would make the error systematically because they had not learned or acquired the correct form of it. In short, error appears if the learners have not learned or understood an item, although this item has been covered in class. For example, a teacher has taught the use of simple present tense, but the learners still get it wrong when they write a sentence. In this case, the learners seem unable to correct their faults by themselves, even by applying the rules that they know.

2.4.3 Differences between Error and Mistake

The error is a systematic deviation that occurs when the learners are inconsistent in learning the language. The learners who learned English as a foreign language would make the error thoroughly, caused by their lack of understanding the right language form (Norrish, 1983). The error is a noticeable deviation, that reflects the learners' competence. It is a systematic deviation made by the learners whose rules of the target language has not been dominated yet by them. The learners cannot self-correct the error because it is a reflective product of their current stage of L2 development, or underlying competence (Larsen-freeman & Micheal, 1991).

The mistake is used when the learners sometimes produce the correct or the incorrect word both in speaking and writing. Meanwhile, they know the right form. It probably happens when they speak rapidly (Watkins, 2005). In addition, the mistake refers to a performance error but they know how to correct it. In fact, many people make mistakes, in both native and second language situations (Rustipa, 2011). The mistake is an inconsistent deviation, in that occasionally the learners use the right or wrong form of language (Norrish, 1983). The mistake happens due to some factors such as memory limitation, tiredness, emotional strain, etc. (Suhono, 2016).

In addition, the mistake occurs when the learners had understood the correct rules, but they were unable to perform their competence. Mistakes happened because of a slip of the tongue and other physical condition, such as fatigue, lack of attention, and strong emotion. But the learners could make correction on their own (Novita, 2014). Moreover, the mistake is different from the error. It happened when the language learners were not able to correct the error until they had sufficient knowledge. The error occurred in the course of the learners' study because they had not acquired enough knowledge. Once the learners acquired additional knowledge, they would be able to correct the error. In fact, when the learners make corrections of their errors, they would become more conscious of learning the language (Rustipa, 2011).

On the other hand, Brown (2007) also stated that error is a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, which reflects the interlanguage competence of the learner. Error is the wrong response since the students do not have knowledge about the right answer, while mistake is the wrong response but they will realize the right answer.

Additionally, Brown (2007) said that a mistake is the performance of error that is either the random guess or slip. It is a failure but they know how to make the correction on the item. Meanwhile, Ellis (1997) stated that there are two ways to differentiate between an error and a mistake. The first way is to confirm the consistency of students' performance. Sometimes, the students use the correct items and vice versa, it is called a mistake. However, if the students use the incorrect items consistently, it is an error. The second way can be seen from their ability to correct their deviation by themselves. If the students are unable to make the correction, it is an error. However, if they are successful in correcting the deviation, then it is a mistake.

Based on such explanations, the researcher concludes that the mistake is different from error. The learners who learn a language will make mistakes. The mistake is the wrong use of language because of lack awareness of the mistake, but the learners can correct it as soon as they realize what they say or write is wrong. Furthermore, the learners will not be able to make a correction on the error and they need help and explanation to correct it. So, the error makes a crucial problem in recognizing and analysing it. Thus, this study sought to find out the most dominant errors among students and the factors causing these errors.

2.4.4 Types of Error

In Dulay, Burt, and Krashen's (1982) surface strategy taxonomy, there are four categories of the errors in sentences, namely; omission, addition, mis-ordering and mis-formation.

a. Omission:

Omission is identified by the absence of an item or a morpheme that must appear in a well-formed utterance (Dulay et al., 1982). Regularly, students make this error when they want to add-s or-es (Liasari et al., 2011). Omission also appears when they do not put the definite article in a sentence (Norrish, 1983). Moreover, omission happens when the learners forget to write the necessary items which must emerge in the sentence. Additionally, this error occurs when the learners do not add the items in writing a sentence. Mostly, the learners fail to add the suffix s or es after a verb, to add to be is, am, and are, to add auxiliary of have or has, and to add to-infinitive. For example, *She*

has best friend. Actually, it should *She has a best friend*. *I want give beautiful bag*. The correct answer should be, *I want to give a beautiful bag*.

b. Addition:

Addition is the type of error which is the opposite of omission. Addition means to put the unnecessary item in a sentence. It is indicated by applying the item that does not need in a sentence (Hasanah, 2017). Commonly, it happens when the learners use double markings and the unwanted items (Suhono, 2016). Moreover, this error happens when the learners have obtained several rules of the target language (Dulay et al., 1982). Generally, the learners use the infinitive with ‘to’ after the modal (must, can, etc). It could be because of their equation about the verb want (+to), so when they write “must or can” they produce ‘to’ (Norrish, 1983). For instance, *she can to if we are sing a song*. It should be *she can sing a song*/ *make a mistake*. It should be *if we make a mistake*.

c. Mis-formation:

Mis-formation is the use of wrong morpheme or structure. Some of students' mis-forms “be” (am, is, and are), auxiliary verb (have/has) and object pronouns. In this type, the students use the incorrect be or verb. In addition, mis-formation is using the wrong forms in a sentence. Due to their misunderstanding of language in using some forms (Soetikno, 1996). For example, *she have Her favourite food is a tall body*. It should be *She has a tall body* *fried rice*, and *donut and pizza*. It should be *her favourite foods are fried rice, donut, and pizza*.

d. Mis-ordering:

Mis-ordering is identified by placing the incorrect morpheme. In this case, some students felt it difficult to put the adjective with the noun in a correct order. Mis-ordering is indicated by the incorrect placement of certain morphemes. In addition, it happens due to the differences between the word sequence in English and Indonesian (Saad & Sawalmeh, 2014). For example, *she has a hair long and black*. The correct form should be *she has a long black hair*.

2.5 Students' Difficulties in Writing

Writing is widely acknowledged as a challenging skill for EFL learners due to a multitude of factors. According to Mohammad and Hazarika (2016), students often encounter significant difficulties in capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and spelling when learning English as a foreign language. These challenges are compounded by students' tendencies to rely on memorization rather than understanding and applying language rules. This issue is further exacerbated by the interference of their native language, leading to errors in phoneme clusters, grammar, and vocabulary use. Purnamasari et al. (2021) also highlight that students face difficulties in developing their ideas and using correct grammatical structures, particularly the simple present tense, when writing descriptive texts. These difficulties can result from insufficient knowledge of the subject matter and a lack of practice in organizing and expressing ideas coherently. Additionally, students often struggle with vocabulary, which can lead to misunderstandings and a failure to convey the intended message effectively. These problems underline the importance of providing proper instruction and practice to help students overcome these challenges and improve their writing skills (Purnamasari et al., 2021; Mohammad & Hazarika, 2016).

The misuse of tenses in narrative essays presents a significant challenge for EFL students, who frequently encounter difficulties in accurately applying past tense forms, which are essential in narrative writing. Research by Bardianing et al. (2023) highlights that students often make errors such as omission, addition, mis-formation, and mis-ordering when using past tenses. These errors stem from various factors, including first language (L1) interference, inadequate grammatical knowledge, and overgeneralization of rules. In their study, it was found that omission errors were the most prevalent, accounting for 98% of the errors, followed by addition errors at 67%, and mis-formation errors at 32% (Bardianing et al., 2023).

For instance, students frequently omit necessary past tense markers, such as in the sentence "*Last week, my friends and I go to Lamongan,*" where "*go*" should be replaced with "*went*" (Bardianing et al., 2023). Addition errors occur when students incorrectly add grammatical elements, such as using double marking: "*I did not realized*" instead of "*I did not realize*" (Bardianing et al., 2023). Misinformation errors involve incorrect verb forms, exemplified by "*We leaved Surabaya at 2pm,*" where "*leaved*" should be

"left" (Bardianing et al., 2023). Another study by Fanny et al. (2022) supports these findings, indicating that mis-formation was the most dominant error among EFL students, with 81% of errors being malformations. Addition errors comprised 10%, omission errors 7%, and mis-ordering errors 2% (Fanny et al., 2022). These errors were particularly evident in the use of irregular verbs, where students often applied regular verb rules incorrectly, leading to sentences like *"She buyed a new dress"* instead of *"She bought a new dress"* (Fanny et al., 2022).

2.6 Strategies of Writing Narrative Essays

Teaching narrative writing involves employing various strategies and activities that help learners develop the ability to organize events, use appropriate language features, and create meaningful and engaging stories. According to Oshima and Hogue (2007), narrative writing strategies aim to assist students in expressing their ideas clearly through a logical sequence of events. These strategies often include brainstorming, story mapping, sequencing events, using time connectors, and peer review activities.

In the pre-writing stage, teachers can guide students to brainstorm ideas and create story outlines or graphic organizers to plan the structure of their narratives. This helps learners visualize the beginning, middle, and end of their stories (Hyland, 2003). During the drafting stage, students are encouraged to focus on character development, setting, and plot coherence, using transitional devices and time expressions to maintain chronological flow (Derewianka, 2003). The editing and revising stage involve activities such as peer feedback sessions and teacher conferences, which provide opportunities for reflection and improvement in language use and content organization (Seow, 2002).

Furthermore, process-based classroom activities such as group storytelling, picture-based narration, and journal writing have proven effective in enhancing students' creativity and fluency in narrative writing (Raimes, 2002; Harmer, 2004). These activities not only improve linguistic accuracy but also encourage learners to use descriptive language and sensory details to make their narratives more vivid and engaging.

Overall, the use of structured strategies and interactive activities enables students to develop both the cognitive and linguistic skills necessary to produce coherent and compelling narrative texts in the target language.

Another research was done by Sari (2017), the title is “Using Story Circle to Improve Students’ Ability in Writing Narrative Text”. This study aimed to discuss one way of solving the problems of students in writing narrative texts, namely by using Story Circle. In this activity, students were divided into several groups and then the teacher read one of the narrative texts in the form of fairy tales, fables or legends that they have never known before. They rewrote the text they had heard before in accordance with the generic structure and language features found in the narrative text, but with different versions according to their imagination. After they wrote the first few sentences of the story on the paper, they had each, the students gave the paper to a colleague on their left. Then, their colleagues added the next sentence based on the idea of the story that had been written before. This activity continued until they completed the complication section of the story. When the paper returned to the real owner, the student wrote down the resolution. Activities of Story Circle is expected to be one of the variations of learning to write in the class so that students are able to pour their ideas properly and precisely, especially in English. In addition, through this technique, students can creatively and freely develop ideas of the story.

2.7 Previous Studies

The literature on EA displays a number of research studies that were conducted to probe the most frequent error types made by EFL learners. The objectives of past studies on the field of EA bear some resemblance to the current study's aims in terms of diagnosing the types of errors performed by EFL students. However, some of these studies focused on issues that were not covered by the current study such as searching the causes of such errors as being interlingual and intralingual in addition to coherence and cohesion as pertaining to students' essay writing.

Similar studies in the field involve Al Tameemy and Daradkeh's research work (2019), which investigated the type and frequency of errors made by EFL college students at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia. Findings showed that students committed errors in grammar (42.15%), punctuation (16.14%), spelling (14.81%), and

capitalization (10.19%). No significant differences were found in the performance between male and female student participants.

With the aim of exploring common writing errors made by Saudi students, Khan and Khan (2016) conducted a study with 60 students from Jazan University. All the errors were identified and the most common errors were found in the use of verb tense and form, subject verb agreement, word order, prepositions, articles, auxiliaries, and spellings. Previous studies revealed that the Saudi students committed different types of errors, and most of these errors were due to intralingual than interlingual transfer. In addition, the results indicated that learners' English writing skills need more attention and improvement.

Another range of studies dealt with Arab learners such as that by Farsani et al. (2015) who scrutinized the essay writing errors of EFL university students studying English at Azad University. Results showed that the students in this study committed 10 common errors. These errors are: (1) verb tense, (2) word order, (3) singular/plural form, (4) subject-verb agreement, (5) double negatives, (6) spellings, (7) capitalization, (8) articles (9) sentence fragments, and (10) prepositions. On the basis of these results, some suggestions and teaching strategies that help reduce future problems regarding writing English essays among Arab learners were proposed.

Similarly, Al-Khasawneh (2014) analysed errors of written English paragraphs by Jordanian Undergraduate Students. The findings of the study revealed that the students of Ajloun National University committed several errors such as spelling, word order, and subject verb agreement. Results also showed that the most frequent error committed by the students was the improper use of English articles.

In addition, Abbasi and Karimnia (2011) investigated grammatical writing errors among Iranian translation students. The analysis indicated significant weakness in the participants' English grammar. Findings also showed that 98% of the students struggled with grammar, and that most of their errors were interlingual, indicating the influence of the mother language on the target language.

Finally, a study conducted by Phuket and Othman (2015) attempted to explore the major sources of errors that occurred in the writing of EFL students. Forty narrative essays composed by Thai university students were collected and scrutinized. Findings

indicated that the most frequent types of errors were word choice, verb tense, use of 38 prepositions, and commas. The errors were mainly from two sources: interlingual and intralingual. According to Phuket and Othman (2015), interlingual or native language interference was found to be the dominant source of errors.

Several studies have been done regarding writing narrative essays. Mulyaningsih (2013) conducted the research under the title "An Analysis of Students' Ability in Writing Narrative Text". This study focused on the analysis of students' ability in writing narrative texts in terms of schematic structure and linguistic features. A qualitative case was used in this study. The data of this study were nine junior high school students' narrative texts that came from low, middle, and high levels of achievement. The analysis of the data indicates that the students from low and middle achievers have insufficient knowledge of writing narrative. It can be seen from the schematic structure and linguistic features of the texts. Moreover, the students from these levels of achievement still need a lot of writing guidance from the teacher. Furthermore, for high achiever student, the teacher only needs to remind the student to read again the text for several times to avoid minor mistakes. Hence, appropriate teaching techniques and approaches should be implemented.

Karolina (2006) in her thesis "Teaching Narrative Text in Improving Writing Skill" found that the students have more knowledge about what narrative texts are; among others are generic structure and many types of narrative texts. They seem to know the steps to make a good writing and it is very useful for them when they write something. Therefore, they can make a narrative text better than before. It was supported by the significant result of the pre- test that is lower (62.09%) than the post- test (79.71%).

Ratnaningsih (2014) in her thesis Analysis of Grammatical Errors in Writing Narrative Paragraph found that there are 199 errors in the students 'English writing narrative paragraph which are divided into four kinds of errors: omission category showed 22 errors, error of addition category showed 7 errors, misinformation category showed 161 errors and mis-ordering category showed only 9 errors in writing a narrative paragraph.

Based on the previous findings above, the research gap that this study aims to bridge has become more obvious. Therefore, this study aims to analyse the students' errors in

writing a narrative text in terms of tense use, a topic that has not yet thoroughly covered in previous studies.

2.8 Summary of the chapter

In summary, this chapter has reviewed the major theoretical and empirical studies related to tense usage and narrative essay writing. The literature indicates that tense is an essential grammatical element that provides clarity, coherence, and temporal organization in written discourse. A proper understanding and application of tense rules allow writers to express ideas accurately and maintain consistency in their narratives. However, many students still struggle with tense usage, often due to limited grammatical competence, language transfer, and lack of explicit instruction. Moreover, the review highlighted that narrative writing, as a creative and expressive genre, requires mastery of both linguistic and structural elements. It involves sequencing events in time, using past tense forms, employing action and thinking verbs, and integrating dialogue to convey meaning effectively. The types and features of narrative essays discussed in this chapter emphasize that tense choice is not only grammatical but also functional, reflecting how writers connect experiences and communicate with readers.

Overall, the reviewed studies demonstrate that tense misuse remains a persistent problem among EFL learners, especially in narrative writing tasks. The insights gained from the literature provide a foundation for the present research, which seeks to investigate the specific causes and patterns of tense misuse among students. Understanding these issues will help educators develop more effective strategies for teaching tenses in writing and ultimately improve students' narrative writing proficiency.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The chapter outlines the methodology adopted for the investigation, detailing the research design and instruments used. It also includes a description of the research instruments and the participants. Furthermore, the chapter explains the procedures used for data analysis, followed by an interpretation of the results.

3.1 Research Design

To fulfil the objectives of this study, a mixed approach was implemented. This investigation was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, quantitative data was collected through a writing test designed to measure the frequency and types of errors made by students while composing narrative essays. In the second stage, qualitative data was obtained from the analysis of the essays to describe, classify, and interpret the nature of these errors. Additionally, qualitative data collected through interviews was conducted with students to explore their attitudes toward error analysis and the misuse of tenses.

3.2 Sampling Techniques

Sampling is a process of selecting a subdivision of the population in any research (Shorten & Moorley, 2014). Deming (1950) defines sampling as “the science and art of controlling and measuring the reliability of useful statistical information through the theory of probability” (p. 2). Since it is almost impossible for researchers to have the entire population participate in the research, they depend on a subcategory to collect the data. The sampling method confers significant practical benefits, including reducing the cost and expediting data collection (Lohr, 2021; Turner, 2020; Latpate et al., 2021). In this study, convenience sampling was deployed. According to Rahi (2017), convenience sampling describes the data collection process from a research population that is effortlessly reachable to the researcher. Distinguishing between probability and non-probability sampling, MacNealy (1999) defined a convenience sample as a sampling

technique that requires the researchers to go to the public "locations and ask passersby to participate" (p. 156). Since convenience sampling basically means that the researchers utilize a sample which is readily available and they have access to, it can be applicable to almost any research. However, the term is exclusively employed if the availability of participants was the researchers' mere concern in choosing a sample and when they could not select from many various populations and research sites (Koerber & McMichael, 2008). In this study, the researcher is a teacher assistant in the college of education where the participants were available and reachable.

3.2 Participants

The sample for this study consisted of 30 third-semester students enrolled in the English Language program in the College of Education at the University of Zawia during the academic year 2023/2024. Participants had received seven years of English instruction during their pre-university education, in addition to two semesters of university-level study, during which they were formally introduced to English grammar as a core module. Convenience sampling was employed for this study, given the accessibility and relevance of the participants to the research topic. As Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) assert, convenience sampling involves selecting individuals who are readily available and willing to participate, thereby facilitating the achievement of the required sample size and research objectives.

3.3 Instruments of Data Collection

In this study, two primary research instruments were employed; a writing test administered to third-semester English language students and a semi-structured interview conducted with five students out of the same participants. The students' writing test was designed to identify the types and frequencies of errors in the use of present and past tenses, as well as to investigate the underlying factors contributing to these errors. The interview on the other hand, aimed to elicit students' perceptions on their errors and the causes that led to the occurrence of errors in writing.

3.3.1 The Writing Test

Writing tests are defined as an instrument designed, produced and implemented to elicit information about an individual respondent in respect of his knowledge, attitude, skills,

assumed values and preference. Being a tool of evaluation (Ojerinde, 1986), test aids researcher judgement based on correct interpretation of data, but for the tool to achieve its usefulness, it has to be carefully designed, so as to fit into the nature, scope and rigour of the humanities. It also must be constructed by the researcher bearing in mind the attributes of the would-be respondents (the subjects) for the investigation. This is one consideration that makes test look like examination, although, as observed by Lawal (2009), both are two different things. The type of the test that was used in this study is the free response test. This is the essay type of test and is common in the humanities. It usually allows more time for respondent's responses, and it permits the respondent free use of words in the expression of thought.

The writing test was administered with the students as a formal exam in the classroom, following approval from the course lecturer to utilize part of her scheduled class time. Participants were asked to compose a narrative essay ranging between 100 and 150 words, within a time limit of one sixty minutes. Each essay was expected to cover approximately one to one and a half-single-spaced page. The students were allowed to choose a topic to feel free and not frustrated. The clarity of the topic was deliberately ensured to avoid any confusion that could hinder the students' ability to express themselves freely and confidently, thus enhancing the reliability of the collected upon completion, all written essays were collected for subsequent analysis, focusing particularly on the identification and categorization of errors related to the use of the present and past tenses.

According to Brown (2004), using essay writing as a quantitative tool allowed for a systematic and detailed assessment of students' grammatical awareness and writing abilities. The written paragraphs served as a quantitative data source, where 30 enrolled in the third semester were asked to write a 100–150-word essay on a topic of their choice. The chosen topic would encourage the use of diverse grammatical structures based on personal experiences, minimizing copying and enhancing authenticity (Hyland, 2003; Tribble, 1996). Additionally, the topic prompted reflection on past events, which typically involve a variety of verb tenses, articles, and sentence structures, aligning well with the research's focus on grammatical error analysis. Instructions and prompts were written in English, while explanations were provided in Libyan to ensure that students fully understood the content and requirements of the writing task.

Collected essays were analysed using a pre-established grammatical error framework covering. To guarantee reliability, two experienced English teachers independently evaluated the essays. Any discrepancies between their evaluations were resolved through discussion and mutual agreement. Each identified error was coded by type, enabling frequency counts and percentage calculations for comprehensive statistical analysis.

3.3.2 Students' Interviews

In this study, the researcher used semi-structured interview. A semi-structured interview has been referred to as a 'conversation with a purpose' (Burgess, 1984), in which the interviewer and respondents engage in a formal interview. The interviewer develops and uses an interview guide. This is a list of open-ended questions and topics that need to be covered during the conversation, usually in a particular order. The open-ended nature of the question defines the topic under investigation but provides opportunities for both interviewer and interviewee to discuss some topics in more detail. It often includes prompts to help the interviewee to answer. The interviewer follows the guide, but is able to follow relevant lines of enquiry in the conversation that may stray from the guide when they feel this is appropriate.

Therefore, based on the analysis of the test, five students with the most errors were invited for semi-structured interviews to explore their perceptions and the causes of their mistakes. The interviews consisted of five main questions: 1) What grammatical errors do you often make in writing? 2) What do you think causes these errors in your writing? 3) How do these errors affect the clarity of your ideas? 4) How do you address errors in your writing? Do you correct them yourself or seek help? 5) Could you give any suggestions for teachers or the university to reduce these errors?

3.4. Data Analysis Procedures

Thirty students studying in the third semester were asked to write an English paragraph (100–150 words) on different topics within 60 minutes. The topic was chosen to encourage students to express their ideas naturally while demonstrating their grammatical skills in a realistic context. All students were enrolled in the English Writing course and were at a pre-intermediate proficiency level, as determined by their placement test results and classroom assessments. The writing task was completed

under the supervision of the course instructor, who was also one of the researchers, ensuring the accuracy and independence of the data collection process. The grammatical errors in the students' writings were analysed over a two-week period, using established theoretical frameworks from Corder (1974), James (1998), and Selinker (1972). This allowed for the identification, categorization, and quantification of common grammatical errors, such as verb tense.

After analysing the written data, five students with the highest number of grammatical errors were invited for semi-structured interviews to explore their perceptions of these errors. Each interview, conducted with the participants' consent for audio recording, lasted between 15 and 20 minutes. The interviews focused on understanding the causes of grammatical errors, students' error correction habits, and suggestions for improving their grammar skills. The interview data were transcribed and analysed thematically using the approach of Braun and Clarke (2006), which provided deeper insights into the students' awareness and attitudes towards their grammatical errors.

3.5 Procedures of data collection

The study was conducted by following these steps or procedures:

1. preparing the test criterion.
2. constructing the interview items
3. piloting both tools (the test and the interview) on the groups of volunteering respondents; to check their validity and reliability.
4. modifying the tools items in order to fulfil the needs of the study.
5. choosing the participants from both categories; teachers and students.
6. obtaining a permission for carrying out the study.
7. meeting the participants.
8. administering the writing test.
9. conducting the interview within two days.
10. analyzing the data and describing the results.

3.6 The pilot study

The researcher undertook certain measures to insure research validity. For instance, the topics chosen for the writing task were completely different from the topics covered in

their course. They were also selected on the basis of familiarity and interest of students to ensure that the students were able to express their thoughts and generate ideas about them smoothly. In addition, the students were not informed that their writing samples will be analysed for research purposes in order to control the Hawthorne effect. The Hawthorne effect refers to the increase in performance of individuals when they realize that they are noticed, watched, and paid attention to by researchers or supervisors (Dörnyei, 2007). Further, reliability of the results was established by adopting the inter-rater method. The answer sheets of the students were assessed by two raters to eliminate subjectivity and provide fairer assessment. The two assessors were teachers in the department of English at the College of Education but they were not participants in the study. The purpose of choosing these assessors is to ultimately ensure the reliability of the results.

3.7 Ethical Consideration

To maintain research ethics, the participants' consent to take part in the study was sought after performing the test. Ethical considerations play a crucial role in ensuring the integrity and credibility of this research study. This study follows ethical guidelines related to informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and data protection to uphold the rights and welfare of all participants (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). Prior to participation, all students are provided with detailed information about the research, including its purpose, objectives, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. For students, the consent form ensures that they are aware that their responses in the test will be used for research purposes only. For interview, the form explains that its responses will be anonymized and used for analysis. Participants have the right to withdraw at any time without any consequences (Bryman, 2016). To protect participants' privacy, all personal identifiers are removed from the dataset (Wiles, 2013). The collected data were stored securely and access was restricted to the researcher only.

3.8 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter outlined the research methodology employed in the study investigating students' problems in narrative essays writing: a focus on misuse of tenses. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining quantitative data from student writing test and qualitative insights from teacher interviews to provide a comprehensive analysis.

The research design was justified based on its ability to capture both numerical trends and in-depth perspectives. The research setting and participant selection criteria were described. In terms of data collection, test was designed to assess students' use of tenses in narrative essays, while semi-structured interviews with students provided expert insights into writing-related difficulties, and the way teachers respond to students' errors. The data analysis procedures incorporated statistical methods (e.g., descriptive statistics) for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data, ensuring a robust and valid interpretation of the findings. Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the study. Overall, the methodology outlined in this chapter establishes a strong foundation for the next stage of the research, where the results and analysis will be presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces the procedures and the methods of data analysis. There were basically two instruments that the researcher used for data collection, namely a writing test and a semi-structured interview. For the writing test, the researcher used error analysis (EA) that was proposed by Stephen Corder in 1976. EA is done by carrying out four stages consecutively. The four consecutive stages are: (1) "collection of samples of the language learners, (2) identification of errors, (3) description of errors, and (4) explanation of errors". It is very necessary that some data collected are presented in a tabular form using percentages in order to give the work more accurate with regard to prompts reference of data collected. During the data, collection the researcher did not find too much difficulties because respondents did not prove stubborn to him.

4.1 Analysis of the Writing Test

In the first stage of analysis, the identified errors were described and categorized based on Dulay et al.'s (1982). All selected errors were classified according to the four subcategories outlined in this taxonomy: omission, addition, mis-formation, and mis-ordering. Each detected error was systematically assigned to its corresponding category. Following the classification, the frequency of each error type was calculated. Subsequently, the data obtained from the written test were analysed quantitatively using percentage calculations to determine the distribution of error types. Finally, a graphical representation was created to visually illustrate the most common types of errors committed by the participants. For getting the quantitative data, we will quantify error types and they will be described in the table of frequency and percentage as follows $P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$ P: Percentage F: Frequency N: Number of cases (total of frequency). Following the identification and classification of errors, the subsequent stage involved explaining the sources of these errors in accordance with Brown's (2000) framework. The errors were categorized into four main sources: interlingual errors, intralingual errors, context of learning errors, and communication strategy errors. The distribution of

error types based on their sources was then calculated using percentage values. Those particular procedures were expected to provide us with significant information concerning students' errors, their types and their sources. They also help us to be aware of how to reconstruct errors.

Table 4. 1: Analysis of the writing test

No.	Type of Error	Count (n)	Percent (%)
1	Mis-formation error	10	18.5%
2	Omission error	11	20.4%
3	Addition error	21	38.9%
4	Mis-order	12	22.2%
	Total	54	100%

After gathering the data, the researcher counted the number of errors made in the writing test by students of English at the College of Education in Zawia University. The detected errors were numerous. Those errors differ in their types and sources. The total number of errors is 54 errors and they are categorized as follows; Errors of omission, errors of addition and errors of mis-formation, and mis order errors.

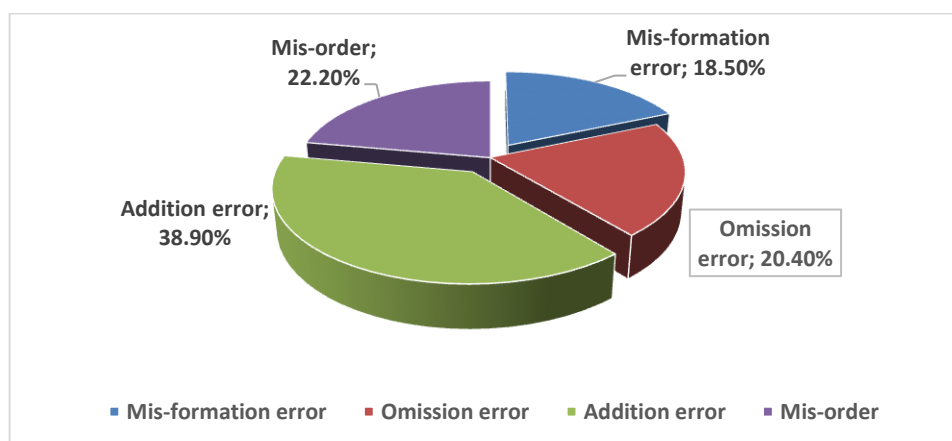


Figure 4. 1: The total number of errors

Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1 above show how many errors occurred in students' narrative essays. In addition, it shows the percentage of each error type. The most frequent error made by third semester students of English at Zawia University is addition error with 21

errors of the total 54 errors. Because students are not able to decide which form or which verb should be used, they find difficulty in choosing the correct verb and the correct form. Then, omission error occurred 11 times with 20.4 %. Next, addition error appears 21 times of the total number of errors with 38.9%. Then mis-ordering error with 12 times with 22.2%. After categorizing the errors based on their types, were further analysed according to their sources.

As shown in the table below, the majority of the errors (43 out of 54), accounting for 81.1%, were intralingual in nature. In contrast, interlingual errors, those resulting from language transfer from the first language (L1) to the second language (L2), accounted for only 18.9%, with a total of 10 instances. The high frequency of intralingual errors can be attributed to the complexity of the English tense system. Moreover, unlike intralingual and interlingual sources, no errors were found to be caused by the context of learning or the use of communication strategies, as none of the participants made mistakes that could be linked to these factors.

Table 4. 2: Type of Error

Type of Error	Count (n)	Percent (%)
Intralingual error	43	81.1%
Interlingual	10	18.9%
Total	53	100.0

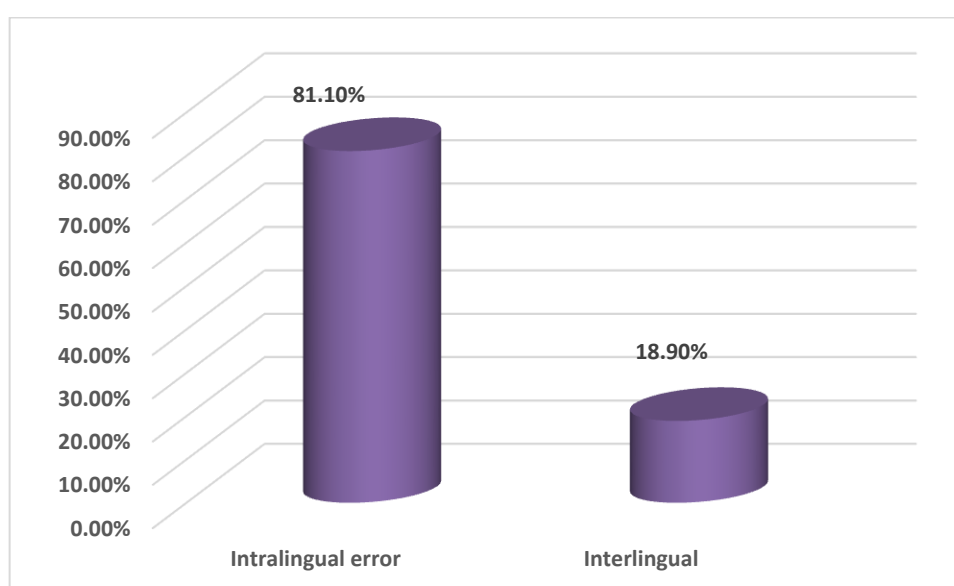


Figure 4. 2: Type of Error

4.1.2 Categorization of Errors

Data analysis showed that the participants committed errors in verb tense (Appendix A). The frequency of the students' verb-tense errors was 43, with a percentage of 81.11%. Most errors were characterized by the wrong use of the present tense by placing a copula (is) prior to the verb, resulting in an invented verb form. This incorrect usage was recurrent in many students' performances. The following examples were quoted from the students' answer sheets:

"I am wish everybody," "She is study," "She is help me," and "My sister is want." The other errors were in dropping off the copula, as in *"She athletic and healthy"* and *"He 19 years old."*

Examples of omission Errors

The following tables shows various examples taken from the students' written essays.

Table 4. 3: omission Errors

Error category	Examples	Source of Error
Omission		Interlingual
	Last year, my family move another city.	
	She going to market yesterday	
	Two days ago, she is very tired because she work hard.	
	In 2010, we start a new life in another city.	
	Last night, I watch TV until midnight.	
	He not come to class yesterday.	
	They go to the museum last weekend.	
	She finish her homework two hours ago.	
	I am happy when I win the prize last year.	
	Yesterday, I go school.	
Mis-ordering Error		Intralingual
	Yesterday I to the park went.	
	He quickly runs every morning.	
	I only have seen him yesterday.	
	They to school always go by bus.	
	I have never my homework forgotten.	
	She only likes chocolate very much.	
	She is always happy very.	
	We sometimes to the movies go.	
	He only sometimes plays football.	
	They often on Sundays meet friends.	
	She has always to school gone early.	

Error category	Examples	Source of Error
Addition Error	He did went to the party.	Intralingual
	She doesn't likes coffee.	
	They are goes to school every day.	
	They are does their homework.	
	We was were walking to school.	
	The peoples are happy.	
	He was went to the park.	
	She didn't went to class.	
	They does plays basketball every weekend.	
	He is was reading a book.	
Mis-formation Error		Intralingual
	She doesn't went to the party.	
	They was playing football last night.	
	I am go to the market tomorrow.	
	He can sings very well.	
	She did not goes to class.	
	Yesterday, I am watched a movie.	
	He is comes from Italy.	
	They was go to the beach.	
	I am agree with you.	
	He go to school yesterday.	

Other tense errors were represented by the use of the wrong tense form, such as using the simple past instead of the present past. For example, “*I took to her every day*” instead of “*I talk to her every day.*” It was also found that the students made errors in the use of the present third-person singular, as in “*My friend always help me,*” “*My mom love it,*” and “*She make me laugh.*”

To sum up, the results of the writing test showed various errors and the most frequent errors were addition errors. In regards to data size, the students' written product was very weak and the researcher could not get as much data as it is supposed to be in an analysis. The researcher depended on the available data or basically what the students could write in the test. One more thing to add, lack of data was due to the researcher focusing on specific category or errors which is misuse of tense.

4.2 The Analysis of the Interview

This section presents the qualitative findings from the semi-structured interviews conducted with five students at the College of Education. The interviews aimed to explore their perspectives about their errors in writing. Thematic analysis was employed to identify key recurring patterns and themes in the interview responses. The results are presented in the following themes: students feeling about grammatical errors in essay writing, causes behind errors in writing and teachers' response to errors.

The purpose of these interviews was to gain deeper insights into the underlying causes of the grammatical errors identified in the students' writing, which could not be fully captured by the quantitative data alone. The 3 items of this interview were formulated based on their test. The selected students who joined the interview were chosen randomly:

- **Feeling about using English grammatical errors when writing an essay**

S1: *"When writing a story in English, I often struggle with using the correct grammar, especially with verb forms. I tend to mix up past tense forms, which leads to frequent mis formation errors. Sometimes, I forget to include necessary words like articles or verbs, resulting in omission errors. My native language, Arabic, sometimes influences my English writing, making it harder to avoid mistakes. I usually practice grammar by doing exercises, but I still find it challenging to apply the rules correctly in my writing."*

S9: *"I'm not very confident with my grammar when writing narratives. I often leave out important words, like 'the' or 'is,' which leads to omission errors. I also sometimes add extra words that aren't needed, causing addition errors. Translating directly from Arabic into English sometimes makes my sentences sound awkward or incorrect. I know practicing more would help, but I still find sentence structure confusing."*

S2: *"Grammar is difficult for me, especially when I have to use different verb forms. I make a lot of mis formation errors because I'm not sure which tense to use. I also leave out words that are important for making sentences correct. My Arabic background sometimes makes me write in a way that isn't right in English. I try to practice grammar, but I often feel like I need more help to avoid these mistakes."*

S3: *"I often make mistakes with word order in my sentences, which results in mis ordering errors. I also tend to leave out words, leading to omission errors. My native*

language influences my writing, making it hard to follow English grammar rules. I usually practice by doing grammar exercises, but applying what I learn in my writing is still challenging."

S4: *"Writing in English is hard because I often mix up the order of words in sentences, which leads to mis-ordering errors. I also forget to include necessary grammar elements, like articles or helping verbs. Sometimes, when I translate from Arabic, it doesn't work well in English. I practice grammar, but I still make a lot of mistakes."*

- **The main causes leading to grammatical errors in narrative essay**

When asked about the causes of their errors, students identified four main reasons. First, most of the interviewed students agreed that mother tongue interference was seen as the most common cause of their grammatical errors. As one student explained, *"Also, when I write, I try to translate my ideas from Arabic, piecing together English words. This leads to incorrect word order and forgetting singular/plural noun forms"*. The word-for-word translation phenomenon is often found in students' writing because sentence structures in Arabic differ significantly from English, which results in structural and grammatical errors. This finding is similar to Nguyen (2019)'s study. The author emphasized that the structural differences between Arabic and English often lead learners to transfer their native language patterns, resulting in grammatical errors. Moreover, James (1998) highlighted that language transfer and simplification strategies are common sources of errors among second language learners, which aligns with students' difficulties in applying English tense and article systems correctly.

Second, many students admitted they lacked grammar knowledge and had limited opportunities to practice writing that integrates grammar. One participant shared, *"I think it's because I don't remember the tense rules well, and I haven't practiced much. It's really hard for me to remember grammatical structures. Also, I often feel pressured by time when writing and worry I won't finish in time, leading to errors in tenses, like in the writing task we did last time."* Students specifically mentioned struggles with verb tenses, sentence structure, and the use of articles and prepositions.

Third, time constraints were another major factor. One student explained, *"I think it's the time pressure and also the fact that I'm not good at grammar. Even though I can do grammar exercises separately, when I have to write a full piece under time pressure, I get nervous and forget the grammar rules. I just try to finish quickly, even if the*

grammar is wrong.” The need to rush through tasks led to more errors. Similarly, Le (2024) and Tran (2017) supported the idea of the impact of limited practice and time constraints on error frequency. Specifically, the authors noted that learners tend to make more mistakes when writing under pressure and when lacking sufficient grammar instruction integrated with writing practice. Additionally, a lack of proofreading skills prevented students from detecting and correcting errors. One student remarked, *“I usually just finish writing and submit it right away; I don’t have time to review or correct mistakes. I just think that once it’s written, it’s done, and I don’t pay attention to checking it again.”* Another shared, *“I often write quickly, focusing more on the ideas than the grammar. I don’t go back to check for mistakes because I feel like I’m already running out of time.”*

- **Solutions proposed to help students improve their grammatical accuracy in writing**

From the students’ perspectives, they offered several suggestions to reduce grammatical errors in their writing. Firstly, they expressed the desire for additional grammar lessons specifically focused on writing skills, as one student shared: *“I think we really need more grammar exercises focused on writing. It would help us understand how to use grammar correctly in real writing, not just in separate grammar lessons. In this way, we can improve both our grammar and writing skills at the same time.”* Moreover, most of them believed that error correction sessions would be very helpful if the teacher explained things in more detail, as another student mentioned, *“It would be really helpful if we could have more error correction activities, where the teacher provides detailed feedback on our mistakes. I feel that when we only get general comments, it’s hard to know exactly what went wrong, but with detailed explanations, we could understand our errors more clearly and know how to fix them. This kind of feedback would definitely help us improve our writing skills.”* Additionally, many of them also emphasized the importance of having a learning environment that promotes collaboration and peer support. As one student shared, *“I think it would be really useful to have more group activities where we can work together to correct each other’s mistakes. In a supportive environment like that, I believe we can learn a lot from our peers, and it would give us the chance to explain things to each other, which might help us understand the grammar rules better. Plus, it would make learning feel less stressful*

and more collaborative.” The students’ proposed solutions correspond well with the recommendations found in prior studies.

- **Teachers' response to errors**

The students emphasized the importance of feedback and comments in general and the relevance of grammar and error correction in particular. All the students acknowledged that teachers’ comments are essential. For instance, S1 said, *“I read the comments at the end of the paper first, because they are the most important, but also all the comments are important I think.”*

In terms of the need for error and grammar correction, all students revealed that there may indeed be such a need for this step from the teacher to check their grammar in writing in general but not only in tense use. Both used the phrase I want (my/all the) grammar mistakes corrected because I want to become better/it’s better. Such statements are revealing and may help us to understand the expectations and needs of ESL writing students. S4 said, *“I need to see inside the paper what I’m doing wrong and [what I’m doing] right. I want all the grammar mistakes corrected, because it’s better I think ... OK, maybe it’s frustrating when you see all that writing on your paper, but later when you read it again, you start thinking, oh, OK, now I know I should do this, and that”.*

Obviously, the students clearly believe in the effectiveness of such correction. Moreover, S 3 said directly that she thinks grammar correction does help her to improve: *“Yes, I think so [grammar correction does help me improve], I mean, how will I know if I’m doing right or wrong if the teacher doesn’t correct the grammar?”*

Overall, regardless the lack of data in the writing tests, these consistent findings suggest that implementing grammar-integrated writing instruction, targeted feedback, and collaborative learning strategies could effectively support Libyan learners in overcoming common grammatical challenges. The analysis results from the students’ perspective in the interview and the writing test showed that they proposed a number of solutions to reduce grammatical errors in their writing, including the need for grammar-focused writing lessons, detailed error correction activities, and collaborative learning environments.

4.3 Summary of the Chapter

Based on the data collected from both the writing test and the semi-structured interviews, the results revealed consistent patterns regarding students' misuse of tenses in narrative essay writing. The analysis of the writing test showed that mis-formation errors were the most frequent type, accounting for 38.09% of all errors, followed by omission errors and a smaller number of addition and mis-ordering errors. These findings indicate that many students struggle to apply past tense rules accurately and tend to switch between past and present tenses due to limited grammatical knowledge and insufficient practice. Similarly, the interview findings supported these results. English language students explained that they often face difficulties in writing narrative essays, particularly in maintaining tense consistency, generating ideas, and organizing events chronologically. Moreover, the students think that the mother tongue was one reason of their problems in writing. intralingual factors—especially the complexity of English tense rules—were the main source of errors, while interlingual transfer from students' native language was a secondary factor.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces a thorough discussion of the results that have been obtained throughout the study. The chapter starts with a discussion of the test findings, linking them with previous research. Then, it represents a debate of the results that have been gained from the students' interviews.

5.1 Most and Frequent Tense Errors

After analysing the collected data; students' writing products in using present tense in writing narrative text and the interview were necessary to discuss the results of this study. The aims of this study were to identify the most dominant errors and to describe the factors causing the students' errors in using present tense in writing narrative text. Thus, the first research question was "what types of errors do third semester English students commonly make in using tense in narrative essays?". Therefore, the first part of the discussion would focus on the analysis of students' writing products in using present and past tense in writing descriptive texts. This stage aimed to find out the types of error and to identify the most dominant students' errors in using the present and past tense in writing narrative texts based on surface strategy taxonomy (omission, addition, mis ordering and mis formation). Omission was identified by the absence of an item or a morpheme that must appear in a well-formed utterance (Dulay et al., 1982). Regularly, students made this error when they want to add-s or-es (Liasari et al., 2011). Based on the results from the students' writing products, most of the students did not use the suffix s or es when they used third person singular and plural nouns. Thus, the most dominant students' errors in using present tense were omission. In this research, there was 11 errors of omission representing 20.04%.

The second error type was addition, where the students used the unwanted items in the sentence. According to Dulay et al. (1982), this type occurred since the learners had obtained several rules in English. Based on the students' writing products, it was found

that most of the students tended to use to-infinitive after using modal auxiliary verbs (must and can). This case happened because of their equation about the verb want (+to). So, when they wrote “must or can” they produced ‘to’ (Norrish, 1983). Thus, this study calculated 12 (13,48%) errors of addition. These errors happened as Dulay et al. (1982) claimed because of the inadequate knowledge of the English rules.

Furthermore, the third error type was mis ordering. It was defined as the incorrect placement of the words. In addition, it happened due to the differences between the word sequence in English and Arabic (Saad & Sawalmeh, 2014). Based on the result of the students’ writing products, there were 3 (3,37%) errors of mis ordering. Some of them wrote in English, but they used the Arabic word order. Meant, the students were still familiar with the Arabic word order.

Moreover, the fourth error was mis-formation. It occurred because the students were still confused about subject-verb agreement and, thus, verb be will change according to the subject type (is, am, and are) and this also applies to other verbs such as the auxiliary verb (have- has). Thus, in English the verb depends on the subject, whereas in Libyan the subject did not change the verb. Therefore, the students were difficult to use the right form of to be (is, am, and are) and auxiliary verb (have and has) based on the subject. This study found 18 (20,22%) mis-formation errors. These errors appeared because the students had a misunderstanding in using some forms in English (Soetikno, 1996).

In conclusion, based on the analysis of the students’ writing products in using present and past tense in writing narrative texts, the researcher found that students committed several errors that were made by the students in the College of Education.

5.2 Causes of Errors

The second research question was “what are the main causes of tense errors made by third year English students in narrative essay?”. This section describes the results of the interview. According to the interview, most students agreed that they were still find it difficult to write a narrative text using the present and past tenses because of the differences between the rules of the mother tongue and English. Furthermore, most students agreed that in English writing their students just translated the word from Arabic to English. Additionally, the students agreed that they are confused about adding

the important items in the sentence because of the differences between Arabic and English structure. This finding is similar to that of Nguyen's (2019) study. The author emphasized that the structural differences between Libyan and English often lead learners to transfer their native language patterns, resulting in grammatical errors. Moreover, James (1998) highlighted that language transfer and simplification strategies are common sources of errors among second language learners, which aligns with students' difficulties in applying English tense and article systems correctly. In this case, the interlingual transfer happened since the students are more familiar with the Arabic structure than English. Thus, when they wrote the sentence in English, they just translated the word based on Arabic structure. Furthermore, the students were still confused about subject-verb agreement and when they are required to use s or es.

Based on the explanation above, it could be concluded that the most dominant students' errors in using present tense in writing narrative text were in omission, and the factors causing the students errors' in using present tense in writing narrative text were the interlingual transfer and intralingual interference. Thus, the third semester students have to practice writing after learning the tenses and the teacher should correct their writing product in order to minimize the errors. The teacher should ask the students to apply their knowledge of tenses in their writing products in order to make them more familiar with the English pattern.

5.3 Teacher' Response to Errors

The students agreed that their teachers do respond to the errors that they make in writing but this response or feedback is not always helpful. Teachers' response to students' writing errors have been widely recognized as one of the most influential factors in improving students' writing competence, particularly in second language (L2) learning contexts. According to Ferris (2003), teachers' feedback serves not only as a tool for correction but also as an essential pedagogical practice that helps learners notice their linguistic weaknesses and develop greater control over language use. Effective error response contributes to learners' ability to refine their grammatical accuracy, vocabulary use, and overall writing quality.

Ferris (2010) further explains that teacher feedback can take various forms, such as direct feedback, in which the teacher provides the correct form, and indirect feedback, where the teacher only indicates that an error has occurred. Both types have their

benefits: direct feedback provides clarity and immediate correction, while indirect feedback encourages students to think critically and engage in self-correction. Ellis (2009) supports this distinction by emphasizing that the effectiveness of feedback depends on the learners' proficiency level and their ability to interpret and apply the feedback given.

However, there has been an ongoing debate about the value of error correction in L2 writing. Truscott (1999) argues that grammatical correction may have limited effects and can even hinder learners' fluency, as it focuses too heavily on form rather than meaning. On the other hand, Ferris (2010) and subsequent research have challenged this claim, asserting that well-targeted and consistent corrective feedback plays a significant role in helping students internalize correct language forms. The key, therefore, lies in how feedback is delivered—whether it promotes reflection and understanding or merely points out mistakes mechanically.

In conclusion, teachers' responses to writing errors are a vital aspect of the writing pedagogy that supports learners' linguistic development, enhances motivation, and improves the quality of written communication. The effectiveness of feedback depends on its clarity, consistency, and constructiveness. Therefore, teachers should adopt a feedback strategy that combines linguistic accuracy with motivational support, encouraging students to engage actively in the revision process and become more autonomous writers.

5.4. Summary of the Chapter

This chapter discusses the findings obtained from both the writing test and the semi-structured interviews in order to interpret and explain the students' problems in using past tenses in narrative essay writing. The discussion connects the quantitative and qualitative results to the research questions and the reviewed literature. The analysis of the writing test revealed that mis-formation errors were the most frequent type, accounting for 70.69% of all tense-related errors. This suggests that students have an incomplete understanding of tense formation and verb conjugation rules. Such errors indicate intralingual difficulties, as students tend to overgeneralize tense rules or apply incorrect forms of verbs, particularly irregular ones. The high percentage of addition errors also reflects students' lack of attention to grammatical structures and their limited knowledge of past tense morphology. The interview findings supported these results.

Students reported that they often struggle to maintain tense consistency when writing narrative essays. They frequently switch between past and present tenses, and rely heavily on the simple past tense while neglecting other forms such as the past perfect and past continuous. The students attributed these problems to both intralingual and interlingual factors. The intralingual sources include confusion about tense rules, overgeneralization, and insufficient grammatical awareness. Interlingual transfer, on the other hand, arises when students apply patterns from their native language to English, leading to incorrect tense use. In conclusion, both the quantitative and qualitative findings consistently indicate that misuse of tense, particularly the simple past, is a significant challenge for EFL students. Addressing this issue requires continuous practice, focused instruction, and active feedback from teachers to enhance students' grammatical accuracy and overall writing competence.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 General Conclusion

This analytical study aimed to investigate the errors made by third-semester English students at Zawia University, with a particular focus on their use of past tenses in narrative essay writing. The research was guided by two central questions:

1. What types of errors do third semester English students commonly make in using tenses in narrative essays?
2. What are the main causes of tense errors made by third-year English students in narrative essay writing?

To address these questions, two research instruments were employed. The first was a written test designed to identify and analyse the most frequent grammatical errors in students' narrative essays. The second instrument involved interviews with students to gather their perspectives on student errors and how they address them in their teaching practices. The findings of the study revealed several key insights. The analysis of the writing test indicated that the most common errors, in descending order of frequency, were mis-formation errors, followed by omission errors and addition errors. Notably, mis-ordering errors were not observed. The interviews with the students further enriched the study by shedding light on their attitudes toward students' language errors and the strategies they use to correct and address these deviations. Based on these findings, several implications have been proposed to improve the teaching and learning of verb tenses in narrative writing, particularly within the context of English language education at Zawia University.

6.2 Recommendations

This study gives the following recommendations to both teachers and students based on the obtained results:

- ***Recommendations for Teachers:***
 - Teachers should provide explicit instruction on English tenses, especially

past tenses, within the context of narrative writing rather than teaching them in isolation.

- Incorporating process writing approaches can help students understand the stages of writing—planning, drafting, revising, and editing—which enhances grammatical accuracy.
- Teachers are encouraged to use authentic materials and examples from students' own writing to demonstrate common tense errors and their corrections.
- Peer review and group writing activities should be integrated to encourage collaboration, reflection, and awareness of tense consistency.
- Continuous formative feedback should be given to help students identify and correct their grammatical mistakes, rather than focusing only on final scores.

- ***Recommendations for Students:***

- Students should take an active role in monitoring their own writing and revising their tense usage before submission.
- They are encouraged to read more narrative texts to observe how native writers use tenses to organize events and express time clearly.
- Students should practice using all past tense forms—simple, continuous, perfect, and perfect continuous—to improve flexibility in writing.
- Keeping a writing journal or writing short stories regularly can help reinforce correct tense use in real contexts.
- Finally, students should seek feedback from teachers and peers and use it constructively to develop greater grammatical awareness and confidence in writing.

6.3 Implications of Teaching

Based on the result and conclusion of this study, the researcher would suggest the following:

1. The teacher should give more exercises in applying the simple present tense in writing narrative texts.
2. After checking the errors in their writing, the teacher should return the tasks with some notes. Thus, they would not repeat the same errors in the further

writing tasks.

3. Since writing descriptive texts focuses on the use of the simple present tense, the teacher should pay more attention to teaching the students how to write the sentences by using the proper tense.
4. The findings of this research focused only on the four types; omission, addition, mis ordering and mis formation. Therefore, this study would suggest that other researchers conduct research which categorizes the errors in other types.

6.4 Limitations of the Study

Despite the significance of this study, several limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, not all students were willing to participate in the written test. This reluctance may be attributed to a lack of motivation, a perception that the study would not yield tangible benefits, or a lack of confidence in their essay writing abilities. Moreover, the study was limited to a small sample of 30 third-semester English students, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to a wider population. Another limitation lies in the scope of the grammatical focus: the study concentrated solely on the use of present and past tenses, although other tenses could have been examined. This narrow focus was primarily due to time constraints. Additionally, some students did not respond as thoroughly or honestly as expected. In several cases participants provided paragraph-style responses instead of structured essays, which affected the quality of the data collected.

6.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the findings and limitations of the current study, several suggestions are proposed for future research. First, further studies could investigate students' tense misuse in other types of writing, such as argumentative or descriptive essays, to compare error patterns across genres. Second, future research might include a larger sample from different educational levels to provide a broader understanding of the problem. Third, researchers could examine the effectiveness of specific grammar teaching techniques or writing interventions aimed at reducing tense errors. Finally, a longitudinal study could be conducted to explore how students' tense accuracy develops over time with continuous practice and feedback.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Writing test

University of Al-Zawia

Faculty of education

Department of English Language



Write a narrative essay about an event or experience that happened to you in the past.
Your essay should be at least one page in length.

Appendix B: Students' interview

- 1) How do you feel about using English grammar when writing an essay?
- (2) What grammar errors do you often make when writing?
- (3) Does your native language affect your English writing?
- (4) Is it hard for you to make correct sentences in English?
- (5) How does your teachers respond to your errors in writing?