

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Studies

Language is a fundamental aspect of human communication, enabling individuals to express thoughts, share experiences, and convey meaning effectively (Hodel et al., 2017). One important component of language learning is sentence construction, which plays a crucial role in ensuring clarity and grammatical accuracy (Chomsky, 1957). However, many learners struggle with constructing sentences correctly, especially when using the simple past tense (Fitk, O, 2015). These challenges highlight the need for effective, interactive learning strategies that allow students to internalize past tense rules naturally (Swain, 1985).

Harmer (2007) suggests that regular writing practice, such as maintaining a diary, helps students develop grammatical accuracy and fluency by reinforcing correct sentence patterns through self-reflection and repeated use. Language learning struggles can hinder students' ability to communicate effectively, both in academic settings and everyday interactions (Ellis, 1994; Swain, 1985). Without a proper understanding and mastery of sentence construction in the simple past tense, their communication may lack accuracy and clarity (Krashen, 1982).

Students encounter challenges in various aspects of language learning, including speaking, pronunciation, and sentence formation. Studies have shown that diary writing can significantly improve language skills. Schmidt's

(1990) Noticing Hypothesis suggests that learners must consciously recognize grammatical structures before being able to produce them accurately. Additionally, Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis highlights the importance of writing practice for internalizing grammar rules. Diary writing serves as an effective tool that allows students to reflect on past experiences while reinforcing sentence structures naturally (Harmer, 2007; Hyland, 2004). One common issue is the incorrect use of verbs in past tense constructions (Tomasello, 2003). Many learners are confused about which verbs to use, how to conjugate them properly, and how to maintain consistency in tense usage.

The simple past tense plays an essential role in communicating events or actions completed in the past (Smith, 2003; Johnson, 2006). According to Oshima (2002), "The simple past tense is the verb form used for an action that began and was completed in the past." Hornby (1948) stated that past tenses refer to events or actions that occurred earlier, in the past, or represent memories of the past. The past simple tense is used to describe completed actions or situations in the past, and it does not connect to the present (Swan, 1980).

However, many students struggle to describe actions or events that occurred and were completed in the past. Ellis (1994) explains that second language learners often develop interlanguage, an evolving linguistic system influenced by their native language, which can result in persistent mistakes in past tense usage, such as incorrect verb conjugation, improper sentence structure, and subject-verb agreement errors. According to Brown (2007),

errors in past tense construction often stem from overgeneralization, where students apply regular past tense rules to irregular verbs. Moreover, Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis underscores the importance of learners consciously recognizing and paying attention to correct past tense structures in input before they can produce them accurately.

One potential solution is diary writing, which allows learners to reflect on past experiences while practicing grammatical structures naturally (Harmer, 2007). By documenting daily activities and past events, students can reinforce their understanding of sentence patterns, verb usage, and tense consistency (Hyland, 2004). Regular engagement with this practice helps learners develop greater fluency and accuracy in constructing sentences (Krashen, 1982). Through continuous exposure and practice, students can develop better proficiency in constructing sentences accurately (Swain, 1985). Additionally, diary writing encourages the development of other essential writing skills, such as sentence fluency, coherence, and the organization of ideas (Harmer, 2007; Dincel & Savur, 2019). It provides a meaningful context for language use, which can significantly improve students' ability to construct grammatically correct sentences and express past actions effectively.

Harmer (2007) also emphasizes that diary writing allows individuals to track their progress over time, making it easier to identify areas of improvement and personal growth. Additionally, it encourages a habit of regular writing, which helps build confidence and fluency in expressing thoughts (Elbow, 1973). Moreover, diary writing can serve as a stress-relief mechanism,

providing a safe space for individuals to process emotions and experiences (Pennebaker, 1997). Finally, it fosters creativity, as writers can experiment with different styles, tones, and structures without the fear of judgment (Lamot, 1994).

Nowadays, it is common for individuals to keep personal items, such as diaries, to express their thoughts, concerns, or experiences. Many people use diaries as tools to write about their personal challenges (Pennebaker, 1997). Lepore and Smyth (2002) also investigated how diary writing can help individuals cope with stress. Their studies suggest that keeping a diary can be particularly effective in managing symptoms of anxiety and trauma. Writing about personal events in a diary helps individuals make sense of their lives, which can be a powerful tool for self-discovery and growth (McAdams, 2001). Furthermore, Deci and Ryan (2000) argued that diary writing can fulfill basic psychological needs, offering individuals a space to express themselves freely (autonomy), reflect on personal growth (competence), and connect with their inner thoughts and values (relatedness), ultimately promoting psychological health.

The word "diary" originates from the Latin word *diarium*, where *di-* means "day," and the suffix *-arium*, along with its modern equivalent *-ary*, means "in connection with" or "pertaining to" (Weekley, 1921). Therefore, a diary is essentially a daily log that records events or thoughts that occurred during the day. Diaries are usually updated daily, remain private, and are written for an audience of one (Cameron, 1992). By writing in a diary every

day, individuals can improve their writing skills as it encourages consistent practice, helping students become accustomed to writing correctly and improving their writing over time (Murray, 1968).

A study conducted by Dincel and Savur (2019) involving teacher education students showed that candidates who regularly keep a diary begin to question their lives and strive to manage them more effectively. Keeping a diary is not merely a hobby but also a valuable tool for understanding and reflecting on what has been taught (Dewey, 1933). Dewey emphasized the importance of reflective thinking in the learning process, suggesting that reflection enables individuals to integrate what they have learned and apply it more meaningfully. Donald Schön (1983) further explored how reflection on practice, which can include journaling, helps individuals improve their understanding and problem-solving abilities in real-world contexts.

A diary not only helps students freely express their ideas and thoughts but also assists them in organizing these ideas logically (Vygotsky, 1978). Additionally, Piaget (1952), known for his work on cognitive development, argued that children organize and process their thoughts as part of their intellectual growth. Diaries primarily use the simple past tense since they recount past experiences. Therefore, students must be able to construct sentences in the past tense (Krashen, 1982). In relation to English teaching, it is crucial for students to master the construction of simple past sentences to communicate effectively. The ability to describe past events clearly and coherently is an essential skill for both academic and everyday communication.

Diary writing, as a reflective and repetitive practice, provides an excellent avenue for students to reinforce their understanding of past-tense structures and improve their overall proficiency in English. Moreover, as Vygotsky (1978) suggested, writing serves as a form of scaffolding a way for students to build upon their existing knowledge with the help of feedback and self-reflection. Through consistent practice in diary writing, students can move toward greater grammatical accuracy and fluency, ultimately improving their ability to communicate in English.

It is hypothetically assumed that diary writing could be the potential way out for students' problem in constructional sentences simple past tense. This research is focused on the Effectiveness Of Using Diary Writing In Constructing Simple Past Sentences at Man 1 Padang Pariaman.

B. Identification of Problem

1. Students' ability to construct grammatically correct sentences, particularly in the simple past tense, remains a challenge in learning English.
2. Many students struggle to apply proper grammatical rules, leading to frequent errors in past tense usage. Ineffective teaching methods and a lack of consistent writing practice may contribute to their difficulties in constructing accurate sentences.
3. Therefore, a learning strategy that enhances students' understanding and skills in using the simple past tense is necessary.

C. Limitation of Problem

In this research, the analysis was limited to the use effectiveness of Diary Writing In Constructing Simple Past Sentences at Man 1 Padang Pariaman the class XI F6 and F7.

D. Formulation of the Problem

Based on the description of the background, identification and limitation of the problem above, the formulation of this research is “ is there any significant effect of diary writing in constructing simple past sentences to students at MAN 1 Padang Pariaman”?

E. Purpose of The Research

The purpose of the research was to know whether using diary writing gives significance in constructing a simple past sentence to students at MAN 1 Padang Pariaman.

F. Significances of the Studies

This study is expected to serve as an alternative approach to improving students' ability to construct sentences in the simple past tense through an engaging and effective medium Ellis (2006). The findings may be beneficial for English teachers, students, and future researchers in enhancing language learning media .By incorporating reflective practices, such as diary writing, into the language learning process, students can gain a deeper understanding of grammatical structures and develop greater fluency in using the simple past tense in context (Richards & Lockhart 1994)

For English teachers, the study could offer practical strategies for integrating writing activities that focus on past tense construction, fostering a more interactive and student-centered approach to language teaching (Ellis 2006). Teachers could adapt the findings to design classroom activities that encourage regular writing practice, feedback, and reflection, facilitating more effective learning outcomes (Harmer, 2007, Nation; 2009).

For future researchers, this study may open avenues for exploring the intersection of different language learning strategies and their impact on specific language components, such as verb tenses. It may also pave the way for examining how reflective writing practices can be applied to other aspects of language acquisition, such as vocabulary development, sentence complexity, or reading comprehension (Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Hyland, 2003).

1. Theoretical Significance

Diary writing is an effective tool for improving sentence construction, especially in mastering the simple past tense, as it reinforces grammar, verb selection, and coherence through continuous practice (Alin, 2016; Arianti, 2020; Harmer, 2007). It also enhances broader writing skills by internalizing grammatical structures and promoting fluency (Tomasello, 2003; Hyland, 2004). Additionally, diary writing fosters metacognitive skills, helping students plan, revise, and monitor their writing (Flavell, 1979). Based on Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis and Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis, diary writing

encourages learners to focus on past-tense usage while actively constructing sentences, leading to improved accuracy and gradual mastery of complex grammar (Pienemann, 1998).

2. Practical Significance

Diary-keeping serves as an effective tool for students to practice forming past-tense sentences naturally. For educators, it offers an engaging instructional strategy that fosters self-reflection, language development, and metacognitive awareness.

This study also serves as a reference for future research on language learning.

- a) For Students: Diary writing provides a meaningful and personal way to practice English grammar, particularly past-tense structures.
- b) For Teachers: This study offers insights into an interactive teaching method that encourages self-reflection and active learning.
- c) For Future Researchers: The study can serve as a reference for further research on writing-based learning media in language acquisition.
- d) For Language Learners: This study highlights the potential of diary writing as an individualized tool for improving language proficiency.
- e) For Educational Institutions: The findings of this study can encourage educational institutions to explore alternative language learning methods beyond traditional textbook-based approaches.
- f) Practical Significance for Language Acquisition: This study

- g) highlights the practical benefits of incorporating diary writing into language learning as an alternative approach to improving grammatical accuracy.

G. Definition of Key Terms

1. Diary Writing

Diary writing is a personal record of daily experiences, thoughts, and reflections, helping individuals practice past-tense sentences while improving grammar, self-reflection, and writing confidence (Harmer, 2007; Dincel & Savur, 2019). It enhances writing fluency and strengthens the connection between language and personal experiences (Hyland, 2004). Additionally, Schön's (1983) concept of reflective practice emphasizes that diary writing helps individuals evaluate experiences, recognize thought patterns, and foster self-improvement.

2. Sentence construction

A sentence is a structured unit of speech that follows language rules and conveys a complete thought (Bussmann, 1996; Chomsky, 1957). Chomsky distinguished between deep (abstract meaning) and surface (spoken/written) structures. Sentences also serve ideational (content), interpersonal (social), and textual (coherence) functions (Halliday, 1994).

3. Simple Past Tense

The simple past tense is used to recount past experiences and completed actions (Oshima, 2002; Azar, 1999; Murphy, 2019). It often includes time markers like "yesterday" or "last year" to clarify when events occurred (Murphy, 2012). Its use in writing is influenced by linguistic theories on grammar acquisition.

