

**EFL STUDENTS' USE OF ENGLISH TENSES ACROSS DIFFERENT
SECTIONS OF THEIR BACHELOR'S THESES**

THESIS

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THESIS

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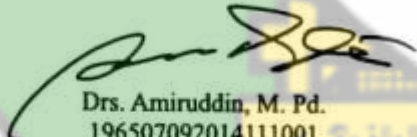
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**EFL Students' Use of English Tenses Across Different Sections of Their
Bachelor's Theses**

adalah benar-benar karya saya, kecuali semua kutipan dan referensi yang disebutkan sumbernya. Apabila kesalahan dan kekeliruan didalamnya, maka akan sepenuhnya menjadi tanggung jawab saya. Demikian surat pernyataan ini saya buat dengan sesungguhnya.

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Saya yang membuat surat pernyataan



Nada Salsabila

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ABSTRACT

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This study analyzed the use of English tenses in Bachelor's theses written by EFL students of the English Education Department at UIN Ar-Raniry. Specifically, it aimed to identify the types of tenses used, examine their distribution across the five main thesis sections (Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Findings and Discussion, and Conclusion), and evaluate the accuracy of their usage both formal and functional. This research employed a quantitative descriptive design through document analysis. Data were collected from 20 complete bachelor's theses defended in 2026 and analyzed using a coding sheet. The findings revealed that Present Simple was the most frequently used tense (61.1%), followed by Past Simple (21.8%). The distribution of tenses varied across sections: Present Simple dominated in the Introduction, Literature Review, Findings and Discussion, and Conclusion, while Past Simple was most prominent in the Methodology section. Modal verbs increased notably in the Conclusion. In terms of accuracy, 73.70% of the tense instances were accurate, while 26.30% were inaccurate. Functional errors (69.57%) were more dominant than formal errors (31.10%), suggesting that students had greater difficulty selecting the appropriate tense according to the rhetorical purpose of each section rather than in forming the verb correctly. These findings suggest that EFL students need more explicit instruction on the rhetorical functions of tenses in academic writing.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	v
ABSTRACT	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
LIST OF APPENDICES	xii
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION.....	1
A. Background of Study	1
B. Research Questions	3
C. Research Aims.....	4
D. Significance of Study	4
E. Terminologies.....	5
CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW	8
A. Bachelor's Thesis for EFL Students.....	8
B. English Tenses in BA Thesis Writing.....	9
C. Tense Distribution Across Thesis Sections	11
D. Concept of Frequency And Accuracy	18
E. Previous Studies	19
CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY	23
A. Research Design.....	23
B. Source of The Data.....	24
C. Research Instrument.....	25
D. Data Collection.....	27
E. Data Analysis	28
CHAPTER IV FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	31
A. Findings.....	31
1. Types of Tenses Across Thesis Sections	31

2. Distribution of English Tenses Across Thesis Sections	35
3. Accuracy of English Tense Usage Across Thesis Chapters	43
B. Discussion	50
CHAPTER V CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS	56
A. Conclusion	56
B. Suggestions	57
REFERENCES.....	60
APPENDICES	
AUTOBIOGRAPHY	



LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 Distribution of English Tenses Across Thesis Sections	13
Table 3.1 Coding Sheet Sample Format.....	26
Table 4.1 Types of English Tenses Used in EFL Students' BA Theses.....	32
Table 4.2 Distribution of English Tenses Across Different Sections of the Theses ...	35
Table 4.3 Overall Accuracy of English Tense Usage	44
Table 4.4 Distribution of Accurate and Inaccurate Tense Usage in Each Section	44
Table 4.5 Types of Tense Errors Found in the Theses.....	46
Table 4.6 The distribution of both error types across Chapter I to Chapter V	46



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1 Distribution of English Tense Types Used in BA Theses	32
Figure 4.2 Example of tense usage	33
Figure 4.3 Example of tense usage	34
Figure 4.4 Distribution of English Tense Used in Chapter I	36
Figure 4.5 Example of tense usage in the Introduction.....	37
Figure 4.6 Distribution of English Tense Used in Chapter II	38
Figure 4.7 Example of tense usage in the Literature Review	39
Figure 4.8 Distribution of English Tense Used in Chapter III	39
Figure 4.9 Example of tense usage in the Methodology	40
Figure 4.10 Distribution of English Tense Used in Chapter IV	41
Figure 11 Example of tenses usage in the Findings and Discussion	41
Figure 4.12 Distribution of English Tense Used in Chapter V	42
Figure 4.13 Example of tenses usage in the Conclusion.....	43
Figure 4.14 The Comparison of Accuracy Rates Across Sections.....	45
Figure 4.15 Proportions of Error Types Across Sections.....	47
Figure 4.16 Example of Functional Error	48
Figure 4.17 Example of Formal Error	48
Figure 4.18 Example of Mixed Error	49

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A	Appointment Letter of Supervisor
APPENDIX B	List of the Selected BA Theses
APPENDIX C	Coding Sheet (Sample)
APPENDIX D	Samples of Original Data (Highlighted Excerpts)
APPENDIX E	Complete Frequency Data



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

The appropriate use of English tenses is essential in academic writing, particularly in bachelor's thesis writing, because it contributes directly to clarity, precision, and the overall credibility of the text. Tenses do not merely locate events in time. They also perform important rhetorical functions that help writers signal the status of knowledge, construct arguments, and maintain coherence across different sections of a thesis. Research on academic discourse has consistently shown that tense choice is closely related to the communicative purpose of each part of the text (Amnuai, 2018).

In academic writing, the present tense is frequently used to express general truths, widely accepted facts, and current interpretations of knowledge. The past tense is typically employed to report completed research actions, specific findings from previous studies, and the procedures carried out by the writer. Meanwhile, the present perfect is often chosen to indicate that earlier research still has relevance to the present discussion or to highlight ongoing trends in the field (Okuyama, 2020). These patterns of tense use are not arbitrary. Studies that adopt a function-first approach have demonstrated that particular tenses tend to align with specific rhetorical functions, such as making topic generalisations, reviewing previous research, or establishing the

significance of the current study (Öztürk, 2019). Similar findings have also been reported in analyses of research article introductions and abstracts, where tense selection shifts according to the rhetorical move being realised (Rustipa et al., 2023)

In the context of bachelor's theses, matching tense choices to the rhetorical purposes of each section becomes especially important. When writers use tenses inconsistently or select forms that do not support the intended communicative function, the text may become ambiguous or difficult to follow. Such problems can reduce the coherence of the argument and weaken the overall quality of the academic work. Therefore, a clear understanding of how tenses function rhetorically is necessary for producing effective academic writing at the undergraduate level.

However, EFL students often face significant difficulties in using English tenses appropriately. Many EFL students struggle to select and apply appropriate tenses when writing their bachelor's theses. They frequently mix tenses inconsistently or use them inappropriately in relation to the rhetorical purpose of each section. This issue occurs because students tend to focus more on content development than on grammatical accuracy, particularly in tense usage (Romadhon, 2021).

Previous studies have shown that tense-related problems are common among EFL learners. Romadhon (2021) reported that in the Research Method section, the Simple Present Tense accounted for 48.64% and the Simple Past Tense for 45.96% of the total tenses used. This finding indicated that students tended to rely heavily on a limited range of tenses. Similarly, other researchers such as Pasaribu et al. (2021), Mubarok and Budiono (2022), and Azizah et al. (2025) identified verb tense errors as

a recurring problem in EFL students' academic writing, including theses and thesis proposals. Nevertheless, most of these studies focused only on general grammatical errors or specific sections of academic texts.

Although previous research has provided valuable insights, several gaps remain. Few studies have systematically examined both the frequency and accuracy of tense usage across all sections of complete bachelor's theses. In addition, limited research has offered a comprehensive analysis of how EFL students use tenses from the Introduction to the Conclusion. Therefore, this study aims to fill these gaps by employing a descriptive quantitative approach through document analysis. This research identifies the types of English tenses used, examine their distribution across different sections (chapter I, chapter II, chapter III, chapter IV, chapter V), and evaluates the accuracy of tense usage based on established academic writing conventions (Wallwork, 2011; Caplan, 2012). By focusing on the analysis of actual thesis documents, this study provides a comprehensive picture of how EFL students use English tenses in their bachelor's theses.

B. Research Questions

Based on the aforementioned research background, the study is designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What types of English tenses are used in EFL students' bachelor's theses?
2. How are these tenses distributed across different chapters of EFL students' bachelor's theses?

3. How accurate is the use of English tenses in each chapter of EFL students' bachelor's theses?

C. Research Aims

The study aims to investigate the use of English verb tenses in bachelor's theses written by EFL students. The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the types of English verb tenses used in EFL students' bachelor's theses.
2. To analyze the distribution of English verb tenses across different sections of the bachelor's theses, such as Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Finding and Discussion, and Conclusion.
3. To evaluate the accuracy of English tense usage in the EFL students' bachelor's theses and identify common tense errors.

D. Significance of Study

This study provides both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of English language teaching and academic writing.

Theoretically, this research enriches the existing literature on tense usage in student academic writing. Unlike previous studies that focused primarily on error analysis or examined only specific sections, this study investigates how tenses function rhetorically from the introduction to conclusion and suggestions. The findings are expected to strengthen the body of knowledge regarding the interplay between tense

usage and rhetorical purposes in BA theses writing. Practically, the results of this study will benefit several parties:

1. EFL Undergraduate Students

The findings can help students become more aware of the appropriate use of English tenses in different sections of their thesis. By understanding the expected tense patterns and rhetorical functions, students can make more informed decisions when writing their BA theses, thereby improving both grammatical accuracy and overall coherence.

2. Lecturers and Thesis Supervisors

This study can provide lecturers and supervisors with clearer insights into the common difficulties faced by students in using tenses. The results may serve as a valuable reference for giving more targeted feedback and designing better guidance during thesis supervision.

3. Curriculum and Material Developers

The results can inform the development of more effective teaching materials, modules, or academic writing courses that specifically address the rhetorical use of tenses in thesis writing.

E. Terminologies

To ensure clarity and avoid misinterpretation, the following key terms are defined operationally as they are used in this study.

1. EFL Students

EFL students refer to non-native speakers of English who learn English in a context where it is not used as a primary means of communication in daily life. In this study, EFL students specifically denote Indonesian undergraduate students majoring in English Education or English Literature who are required to write their BA thesis in English (Ratnawati et al., 2018). These students typically face challenges in academic writing due to limited exposure to English in naturalistic settings.

2. Bachelor's Thesis

A bachelor's thesis is an academic document written by undergraduate students as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor's degree. In this study, it refers to a structured research report written in English that consists of five main chapters: chapter I, chapter II, chapter III, chapter IV, chapter V.

3. English Verb Tenses

English verb tenses are grammatical forms of verbs that indicate the time (past, present, or future) and aspect of an action, event, or state. Comrie (1985) defines tense as the grammaticalisation of location in time. In this study, the term refers to the major English tenses commonly used in academic writing, particularly Simple Present, Simple Past, Present Perfect, and other relevant forms.

4. Use of English Tenses Across Sections

This term refers to the employment of verb tenses in different parts of the bachelor's thesis. Each section has its own rhetorical purpose that influences tense

selection. In this study, the sections analyzed are limited to the chapter I, chapter II, chapter III, chapter IV, chapter V.



CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Bachelor's Thesis for EFL Students

Writing a bachelor's thesis is a demanding task for EFL students, as it requires them to produce a lengthy academic document in English, which is not their native language. As the highest academic achievement at the undergraduate level, a bachelor's thesis represents a partial fulfillment of the requirements for a bachelor's degree and demands comprehensive academic investment (Widhiyanto et al., 2024). For EFL students, this challenge is intensified because they must demonstrate both content mastery and advanced academic writing skills simultaneously.

Bachelor's thesis writing constitutes a highly conventionalized academic genre that requires strict adherence to linguistic conventions. Ratnawati et al. (2018) explained that academic writing demands skills in organizing words into sentences, developing ideas into coherent paragraphs, and applying proper grammar and punctuation, while also following specific conventions in structure, referencing, and organization. In the EFL context, these requirements become particularly complex due to the influence of first language interference and limited exposure to academic English discourse.

Grammatical accuracy, especially in the use of English tenses, is essential in EFL students' bachelor's theses. Because a thesis presents research findings, methodology,

and arguments, the appropriate use of tenses is critical to distinguish between established knowledge, past actions, ongoing processes, and future implications., Murray (2006) states that “The highest standard of clarity and correctness is required in a thesis” and that grammatical correctness significantly affects the strength of the argument. Poor tense usage can obscure meaning and make the writing appear incoherent (Murray, 2006, p.43). Furthermore, Hyland (2009) argues that tense selection signals the writer’s commitment to propositions and helps construct a coherent academic argument. Therefore, a detailed understanding of how EFL students use tenses across different sections of their thesis — in terms of types, frequency, distribution, and accuracy — becomes highly relevant for improving academic writing quality.

B. English Tenses in BA Thesis Writing

English tenses play a central role in BA thesis writing as they serve not only as grammatical markers of time but also as important rhetorical tools in academic discourse. In undergraduate thesis, appropriate tense usage helps writers construct clear arguments, distinguish between different stages of research, and position their work within the existing body of knowledge. For EFL students, mastery of tenses becomes especially critical because their thesis must meet high standards of clarity and academic rigor.

The most frequently used tenses in academic research writing, particularly in BA thesis, are Simple Present, Simple Past, and Present Perfect (Paltridge & Starfield,

2020). These three tenses dominate student thesis across various disciplines because they effectively serve the communicative purposes of academic texts. According to Pratama Sari et al. (2023), Simple Present Tense appears most frequently, especially in the introduction section, while Simple Past and Present Perfect are also commonly employed but with different distributions. This pattern shows that EFL students tend to rely on a limited set of tenses when writing their thesis. Therefore, understanding the frequency and distribution of these tenses across thesis sections is essential to analyze students' academic writing competence.

Tenses in bachelor's thesis writing function as rhetorical devices that help writers convey their stance, signal the status of knowledge, and organize their arguments effectively. Different tenses are chosen strategically depending on the purpose of each section.

Simple Present Tense is primarily used to express general truths, state research objectives, present theories, and refer to tables or figures. Pratama Sari et al. (2023) note that this tense is commonly used when students explain the purpose of their research and mention previous results that support current claims. Swales and Feak (2012) add that the present tense is typically employed to refer to the current state of knowledge. Thus, the Simple Present Tense allows writers to establish the foundation of their study and emphasize the relevance of their research.

Simple Past Tense is mainly used to report completed actions, describe research procedures, and review previous studies. According to Pratama Sari et al. (2023), this tense functions to indicate activities or situations that began and ended in the past, such

as reporting previous studies or explaining the limitations of earlier research. It is particularly dominant in the Methodology and Results sections. This tense enables writers to clearly separate past events from the present study, creating a clear chronological distinction in their academic narrative.

Present Perfect Tense serves as a bridge between past research and the current study. It is used to refer to previous studies that remain relevant, highlight research gaps, and summarize areas of inquiry that are still valid (Swales & Feak, 2012; Pratama Sari et al., 2023). This tense is especially useful in the Introduction and Discussion sections to show how the present research continues or extends existing knowledge. Hyland (2009) emphasizes that tense selection, including the use of Present Perfect, helps writers express stance and build persuasive academic arguments.

In conclusion, the choice of tenses in bachelor's thesis is not merely grammatical but highly rhetorical. The ability of EFL students to use these tenses appropriately across different sections directly affects the clarity, coherence, and credibility of their academic work. This understanding serves as an important theoretical foundation for analyzing both the frequency and accuracy of tense usage in students' BA thesis.

C. Tense Distribution Across Thesis Sections

Tense distribution in bachelor's thesis writing is guided by rhetorical conventions that reflect the communicative purpose of each section. Academic writers do not use tenses randomly; instead, they select specific tenses to signal whether information represents general truths, completed actions, ongoing relevance, or future directions.

Understanding these conventional patterns is essential as a theoretical framework for investigating the actual frequency, distribution, and accuracy of tense usage by EFL students across sections of their bachelor's thesis.

Although English contains a wide range of grammatical tenses, academic writing relies primarily on three core tenses: the Present Simple, Past Simple, and Present Perfect. Caplan (2012) refers to these as the major tenses that account for approximately 95–98% of tense usage in academic writing and emphasizes that they should be mastered before less frequent forms. Similarly, Wallwork (2011) identifies these three tenses as the most commonly used in research writing while acknowledging that other tenses, such as the Future Simple, Past Perfect, and Present Continuous, may also be employed when required by specific rhetorical purposes. Therefore, tense selection in academic writing is determined not only by grammatical rules but also by the communicative function of each section of the thesis.

The following table presents a synthesized overview of tense distribution and functions across thesis sections, developed based on established academic writing frameworks (Caplan, 2012; Wallwork, 2011).

Table 2.1*Distribution of English Tenses Across Thesis Sections*

Chapter	Tenses Used	Purpose / When Used	Examples
Chapter I Introduction	Present Simple (most dominant)	For background of the problem, research questions, research objectives, significance of the study, and operational definitions (to explain current situations and what the study will do).	This study aims to examine the effect of digital learning on students' motivation. The research focuses on senior high school students in rural areas.
	Present Perfect	To refer to previous studies that are still relevant up to the present.	Several studies have shown that digital learning improves student engagement. Previous research has focused mainly on urban areas.
	Past Simple	To mention specific previous studies or historical facts with dates.	Smith (2022) found that traditional teaching methods were less effective. In 2020, the pandemic forced many schools to adopt online learning.
	Future Simple (occasionally)	To state long-term goals or expected contributions.	This research will contribute to the development of better digital learning models.
Chapter II Literature Review	Present Simple (dominant)	To define concepts, explain theories, and cite experts' opinions.	The theory of constructivism states that students learn best through active participation. Motivation plays an important role in learning outcomes.
	Present Perfect	To summarize the development of theories or research trends from the past until now.	Researchers have increasingly focused on the use of technology in education. Many studies have reported

			positive effects of gamification.
	Past Simple	To refer to classic theories or older studies with specific years.	Piaget (1954) proposed the stages of cognitive development.
Chapter III Research Methodology	Past Simple (very dominant)	To describe the research design, population, sample, instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis that have already been conducted.	The data were collected using questionnaires. Participants were selected through purposive sampling. The test was administered to 150 students.
	Present Perfect	To refer to instruments or methods that have been validated and still have an impact.	The instrument has been validated by three experts. The questionnaire has been used in previous similar studies.
	Present Simple	To describe standard instruments or general procedures that still apply.	The Likert scale consists of five response options. The interview protocol contains ten open-ended questions.
Chapter IV Results and Discussion	Past Simple	To report the findings obtained in the study.	The analysis revealed a significant difference between the two groups. Most respondents reported high motivation levels.
	Present Simple	To interpret results, discuss implications, and compare with theories.	These findings indicate that digital tools enhance learning. This result supports the theory of constructivism.
	Present Perfect	To link the current findings with existing theories or knowledge.	This result has contributed to the understanding of digital learning in rural areas. The results have provided new evidence for educational policy.

Chapter V Conclusion and Recommendations	Present Simple	To summarize conclusions and overall implications.	This study demonstrates that digital learning improves student motivation. The research provides valuable insights for teachers.
	Present Perfect	To summarize the overall contributions of the study.	The research has successfully achieved its objectives. This study has filled the gap in previous literature.
	Modal Verbs + Present Simple	To give recommendations and suggestions for future research.	Future research should explore the long-term effects. Teachers can implement these strategies to improve student engagement. Schools may consider providing better digital infrastructure.

Note. Developed by the researcher based on Caplan (2012) and Wallwork (2011).

As illustrated in Table 2.1, the distribution of tenses varies across different sections of a bachelor's thesis according to their rhetorical functions. The most commonly used tenses in scientific and academic theses are the 4S Tenses: Simple Present, Simple Past, Simple Present Perfect, and Simple Future (Shareef, 2024). While these tenses can appear throughout the thesis, their distribution tends to vary systematically according to the function of each section.

1. Abstract

In the Abstract, the Past Simple tense is the most dominant because this section summarizes what was done in the study (methods) and what was found (results). The Present Simple is used for stating general conclusions and implications that are still

relevant. Present Perfect is used sparingly, usually only for brief background information (Wallwork, 2011).

2. Introduction

The Present Simple is the main tense used in the Introduction. It is applied when giving general background information, explaining the importance of the topic, highlighting current facts, identifying research gaps, and stating the aims or objectives of the current study. Present Perfect is commonly used to refer to previous studies that are still relevant today, while Past Simple is used only occasionally when mentioning specific previous studies with exact dates (Wallwork, 2011).

3. Literature Review

In the Literature Review, the Present Simple tense dominates. It is used when reporting what other researchers say, argue, claim, or find, as these statements are generally considered still valid. The Present Perfect is used to describe research trends or developments from the past up to the present time (Wallwork, 2011).

4. Methodology

The Past Simple tends to be the most dominant tense in the Methodology section. This tense is used to describe everything that was actually done during the research process, including how participants were selected, how data were collected, what instruments were used, and how the data were analyzed. Passive voice is strongly recommended in this section (Wallwork, 2011).

5. Results / Findings

The Past Simple is the primary tense in the Results section because it reports what was found in the study. The Present Simple is used only when referring to tables, figures, or data that are presented in the thesis itself (Wallwork, 2011).

6. Discussion

The Present Simple is the dominant tense in the Discussion. It is used when interpreting the results, explaining their meaning, discussing implications, comparing findings with existing literature, and drawing conclusions. Past Simple is used when making direct comparisons with specific previous studies or the researcher's own results. Present Perfect can be used to link the current findings to the broader existing knowledge in the field (Wallwork, 2011).

7. Conclusion

In the Conclusion, the Present Simple is the main tense. It is used to summarize the main contributions of the study, state the final conclusions, and highlight the overall significance or implications of the research. Modal verbs combined with the Present Simple are typically used when giving recommendations and suggesting directions for future research (Wallwork, 2011).

Although these patterns represent common conventions in academic and scientific thesis writing, tense selection is ultimately flexible and depends on rhetorical purposes rather than rigid rules (Maroko & Kiai, 2014). These theoretical expectations provide a solid reference for the present study, which examines how EFL students

actually apply English tenses across sections of their BA thesis in terms of types, frequency, and accuracy.

D. Concept of Frequency And Accuracy

Frequency and accuracy are the two core concepts underlying the analysis in this study. Because this research employs a quantitative descriptive approach, these two parameters become the main tools to investigate EFL students' use of English tenses in their bachelor's thesis. Frequency is used to measure how often particular tenses occur, while accuracy is used to evaluate the correctness and appropriateness of their usage. A solid theoretical understanding of these concepts is therefore fundamental.

Frequency refers to the number of occurrences of a linguistic feature in a given text or corpus. In second language acquisition and academic writing research, frequency analysis is important to reveal patterns, preferences, and distributional tendencies of language use. Ellis (2002) argues that learners are highly sensitive to frequency information in the input, and the repeated occurrence of certain linguistic forms significantly shapes their language production and knowledge. In the context of academic writing, a high frequency of a particular tense in a specific section may indicate students' preference or perceived suitability of that tense for the rhetorical purpose of the section. This study uses frequency analysis to map the distribution of English tenses across different chapters of bachelor's thesis.

Accuracy is defined as the degree to which a learner's language production conforms to the norms and rules of the target language. Housen and Kuiken (2009)

define accuracy as “the extent to which L2 performance aligns with target-like norms,” where deviations from these norms are identified as errors. In tense usage, accuracy includes two important dimensions: formal accuracy (correctness of verb forms and tense structures) and functional accuracy (appropriateness of the tense according to its rhetorical function in context). Polio (1997) developed practical measures for assessing accuracy in L2 writing, while Norris and Ortega (2003) emphasized the need for valid and reliable procedures when measuring grammatical accuracy. In this study, accuracy is evaluated by examining whether the tenses used by EFL students are not only grammatically correct but also rhetorically appropriate for each section of the bachelor’s thesis.

The integration of frequency and accuracy provides a comprehensive and balanced framework for analyzing EFL students’ tense competence. While frequency reveals what students tend to use and the patterns of distribution, accuracy reveals the quality and appropriateness of their tense usage. This theoretical foundation directly supports the present study’s objectives to identify the types of English tenses used, analyze their distribution across different sections of BA thesis, and evaluate the level of accuracy in their application.

E. Previous Studies

Previous studies have extensively explored grammatical errors and tense usage in EFL students’ academic writing. These studies provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by EFL learners in producing grammatically accurate texts,

particularly in high-stakes academic genres such as thesis and thesis proposals. While many studies confirm the persistence of tense-related difficulties, most have limitations in scope, focus, and depth of analysis.

Several studies have specifically examined the use of English tenses in academic writing. Romadhon (2021) investigated tense usage in the Research Method section of students' academic papers and found that Simple Present Tense (48.64%) and Simple Past Tense (45.96%) were the most dominant, while other tenses were rarely used. Okuyama (2020) analyzed the use of Simple Past and Present Perfect in engineering journal articles and emphasized their rhetorical functions. Similarly, Masoud et al. (2021) conducted a frequency analysis of tense errors in EFL students' essays and reported that misuse of tenses, particularly Simple Present Tense, was the most common error type. These studies are relevant to the present research because they highlight the importance of tense usage in academic contexts. However, they are limited in that Romadhon (2021) only examined one section, Okuyama (2020) focused on published articles rather than student writing, and Masoud et al. (2021) analyzed general essay writing rather than specific thesis sections.

Other researchers have adopted a broader error analysis approach in thesis and proposal writing. Octaberlina and Muslimin (2022) found that EFL students made 195 grammatical errors in thesis proposals, with addition and misformation errors being dominant, including problems in verb tense. Pasaribu et al. (2021) reported that verb errors and tense selection accounted for a significant portion of errors in undergraduate thesis. Mubarak and Budiono (2022) identified punctuation, articles, and unnecessary

words as the most frequent errors, although verb tense errors also appeared consistently. These studies share similarities with the present research in identifying grammatical challenges faced by EFL students in academic writing. Nevertheless, they primarily focused on general grammatical errors and did not provide a detailed analysis of the frequency and accuracy of tense usage across different sections of complete BA thesis.

More recent studies have also examined grammatical issues in specific sections of thesis. Azizah et al. (2025) analyzed grammatical errors in the Literature Review section and found that verb tense errors were among the recurring problems. Pardede et al. (2023) identified tense-related issues within grammatical errors in thesis abstracts. Hayati et al. (2024) highlighted that students face difficulties in linguistic features and grammatical accuracy when writing thesis proposals. Listyani and Al-Kadi (2022) further revealed that EFL students, particularly Indonesian learners, struggle significantly with the Present Perfect Tense due to first language interference. Although these studies contribute useful findings, they are restricted to isolated sections and do not examine tense distribution and accuracy across the entire structure of undergraduate thesis.

In conclusion, previous studies have consistently shown that EFL students encounter various difficulties in using English tenses and maintaining grammatical accuracy in academic writing. However, most existing research has focused on general grammatical errors, examined only specific sections of academic texts, or analyzed published articles rather than complete student thesis. Very few studies have

systematically investigated the types of English tenses used, their frequency and distribution across all sections of BA thesis, and the level of accuracy in their application. Therefore, the present study aims to fill this noticeable gap by examining EFL students' use of English tenses across sections of their BA thesis based on frequency and accuracy.



CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design. Quantitative descriptive research aims to systematically describe, measure, and present data in the form of numbers, percentages, tables, and charts in order to provide an objective picture of a phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Sugiyono, 2019). In this research, the quantitative descriptive approach was chosen because the study measured the frequency of English tense usage and evaluated the level of accuracy of tense application in EFL students' undergraduate theses. Through this method, the researcher was able to quantify how often certain tenses appeared across different sections and calculated the percentage of accurate and inaccurate tense usage, thereby producing clear and measurable findings.

This research was classified as document analysis or content analysis. According to Bowen (2009), document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating printed or electronic documents. In this study, the data were not obtained from human participants through questionnaires or interviews, but from existing written documents in the form of undergraduate theses (bachelor's thesis) written by EFL students. The researcher analyzed the complete texts of the theses as the primary data source. Content analysis was applied to identify, categorize, and quantify the use

of English tenses in different sections of the theses, including Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Findings and Discussion, and Conclusion.

This approach was considered suitable because it allowed the researcher to objectively examine linguistic features in authentic academic texts produced by students. The combination of quantitative descriptive design and document analysis enabled this study to provide both numerical descriptions and detailed explanations regarding the types, frequency, distribution, and accuracy of English tense usage in EFL students' bachelor's theses. This design was in line with the research objectives and research questions that focused on "what", "how", and "how accurate" the use of tenses was in students' academic writing.

B. Source of The Data

The data for this study were obtained from BA theses written by undergraduate students of the English Education Department at UIN Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh. Specifically, this study used theses that were completed and defended in 2026.

The primary data in this study consisted of the complete written texts of the selected bachelor's theses. The researcher analyzed the full content of each thesis, with particular attention to the use of English verb tenses across all major sections.

This study employed a purposive sampling technique. This method was chosen because the researcher intentionally selected theses and participants that met specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The selection criteria were as follows:

1. The theses were written by students of the English Education Department at UIN Ar-Raniry.
2. The theses were completed and defended in 2026.
3. The theses were written in English as the main language of the document.
4. The complete theses manuscript was available and could be obtained from the thesis author.
5. The theses covered a variety of research topics to provide a broader representation of tense usage.

A total of 20 BA theses that met the above criteria were selected and used as the data source for this study. The theses were written by 20 undergraduate students of the English Education Department at UIN Ar-Raniry and were defended in 2026. This number of theses was considered sufficient to provide representative data for examining the frequency, distribution, and accuracy of English tense usage across different chapters of the theses.

C. Research Instrument

The main instrument used in this study was a coding sheet developed by the researcher using Microsoft Excel. The coding sheet functioned as a systematic tool for identifying, recording, classifying, and evaluating the use of English verb tenses in the selected BA theses. It consisted of the following columns:

Table 3.1
Coding Sheet Sample Format 1 Table 2

No	Sentence	Tense	Accurate/Inaccurate	Error Types	Remarks

Explanations of each columns:

a. Sentence

This column contained every sentence identified from the selected bachelor's theses that included an English verb tense. Each sentence served as the unit of analysis in this study.

b. Tense

This column recorded the type of English tense used in each sentence, such as Simple Present, Simple Past, Present Perfect, Past Perfect, Simple Future, and other relevant tenses found in the data.

c. Accurate/Inaccurate

This column indicated whether the tense usage was accurate or inaccurate. The evaluation was based on two criteria: formal accuracy (the correctness of the grammatical form) and functional accuracy (the appropriateness of the tense according to the rhetorical purpose of the thesis section).

d. Error Type

If a tense was identified as inaccurate, the researcher classified the error according to its type. The errors included grammatical errors related to tense formation

(formal errors) and inappropriate tense selection based on the rhetorical function of the section (functional errors).

e. Remarks

This column provided brief explanations or comments regarding the analysis, particularly for inaccurate tense usage. The remarks explained why a tense was considered inaccurate and, when necessary, suggested the appropriate tense according to academic writing conventions.

The completed coding sheet served as the primary database for calculating the frequency, distribution, and accuracy of English tense usage across different sections of the bachelor's theses.

D. Data Collection

This study employed document analysis as the technique of data collection. The procedure was conducted systematically in several stages as follows:

1. Accessing and Selecting the Documents

The researcher first attempted to obtain the bachelor's theses through the university library and the English Education Department. However, access to the complete collection of theses was restricted; the library directed the researcher to the department, and the department did not provide direct access to the documents. Therefore, the researcher contacted graduates of the English Education Department individually (via personal messaging) who had completed and defended their theses in the academic years 2026. After obtaining permission from the authors, the researcher

collected 20 complete bachelor's theses that met the purposive sampling criteria. Only complete and officially approved theses were included in the study.

2. Organizing the Data

The selected theses were obtained in PDF format. Each thesis was coded (e.g., T01, T02, up to T20) to maintain anonymity and facilitate data management. The researcher separated each thesis into its main sections: Chapter I (Introduction), Chapter II (Literature Review), Chapter III (Methodology), Chapter IV (Findings and Discussion), Chapter V (Conclusion and Suggestions).

3. Reading, Annotating, and Recording the Data

The researcher carefully read the entire content of each thesis. Every sentence containing a finite verb was identified and recorded into the coding sheet in Microsoft Excel. The researcher noted the type of tense, the section where it appeared, its accuracy status, the type of error (if any), and additional remarks.

E. Data Analysis

The data collected from the bachelor's theses were analyzed using quantitative descriptive analysis. The data analysis was conducted through the following steps:

1. Data Classification

All identified tenses from the thesis were classified according to their types (Simple Present, Simple Past, Present Perfect, Simple Future, etc.) and the section where they appeared (Chapter I-V).

2. Frequency and Distribution Calculation

The researcher counted the total number of occurrences of each tense in every section. The frequency was then calculated into percentages using the following formula:

$$Percentage = \frac{\text{Number of specific tense}}{\text{Total number of all tenses}} \times 100\%$$

3. Accuracy Analysis

Each tense usage was categorized as Accurate or Inaccurate. The percentage of accuracy was calculated using the formula:

$$Accuracy Rate = \frac{\text{Number of accurate tenses}}{\text{Total number of tenses}} \times 100\%$$

Errors were further classified into formal errors (incorrect verb form) and functional/contextual errors (inappropriate use according to the section's rhetorical purpose).

4. Data Presentation

The results of the analysis were presented in the form of tables, charts, and diagrams, supported by descriptive explanations to highlight dominant tenses, distribution patterns, and accuracy levels to make the findings clearer and easier to understand. Descriptive explanations were also provided to interpret the patterns, tendencies, and accuracy levels of tense usage.

All data analysis was carried out manually with the assistance of Microsoft Excel for tabulation and percentage calculation. To ensure the reliability of the analysis, the

researcher conducted double-checking and consulted with the thesis supervisor when necessary.



CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings and the discussion of the study based on the analysis of 20 BA theses written by EFL students. The analysis was conducted by carefully reading each thesis, identifying every finite verb phrase containing a tense, classifying the tense type, determining its formal and functional accuracy, and recording the data in a coding sheet. Selected original excerpts from the students' theses are also presented as authentic examples to support the findings. The chapter is organized into two main parts. The first part presents the findings according to the three research questions. The second part discusses the findings in relation to relevant theories and previous studies.

A. Findings

1. Types of Tenses Across Thesis Sections

The first research question investigated the types of English tenses used in the BA theses written by EFL students. A total of 4,023 sentences containing tense forms were identified from the twenty selected theses. To answer this question, every finite verb phrase containing a tense was identified and classified according to its tense category. The analysis of the twenty selected BA theses revealed seven types of tense and modal constructions, namely Present Simple, Past Simple, Present Perfect, Future

Simple, Past Perfect, Present Continuous, and Modal Constructions. The frequency and percentage of each tense type are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Types of English Tenses Used in EFL Students' BA Theses

No	Types of Tense	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Present Simple	2,743	64.36%
2	Past Simple	1,038	24.35%
3	Modal Constructions	281	6.59%
4	Present Perfect	106	2.49%
5	Future Simple	82	1.92%
6	Past Perfect	7	0.16%
7	Present Continuous	5	0.12%

As shown in Table 4.1, the Present Simple was by far the most frequently used tense, accounting for 2,743 instances or 64.36% of the total. It was followed by the Past Simple with 1,038 instances (24.35%) and Modal Constructions with 281 occurrences (6.59%). Present Perfect occurred 106 times (2.49%), while Future Simple occurred 82 times (1.92%). Past Perfect and Present Continuous were the least frequently used forms, with 7 (0.16%) and 5 occurrences (0.12%), respectively.

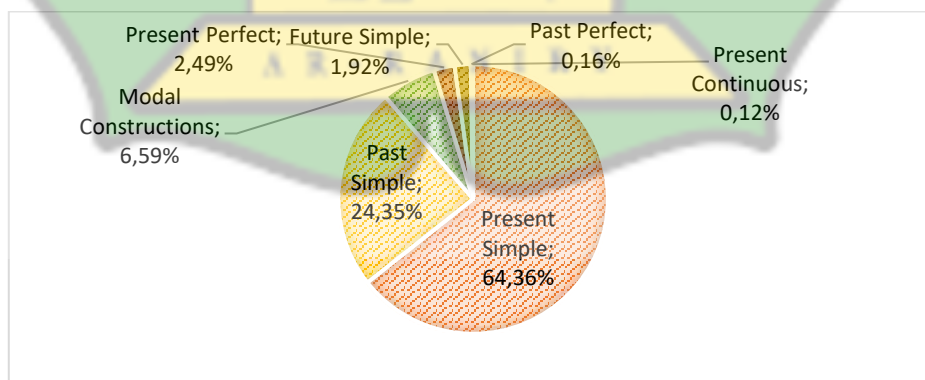


Figure 4.1 Distribution of English Tense Types Used in BA Theses

The figure above visually confirms the clear dominance of Present Simple, which alone accounted for more than half of all tense usage, followed by Past Simple as the second most common form. The other five categories remained relatively minor in the overall distribution.

To illustrate these findings, authentic examples from the students' theses are presented below.

An authentic example of Present Simple usage is shown in the following excerpt taken from Thesis T13 (Chapter I, p. 1):

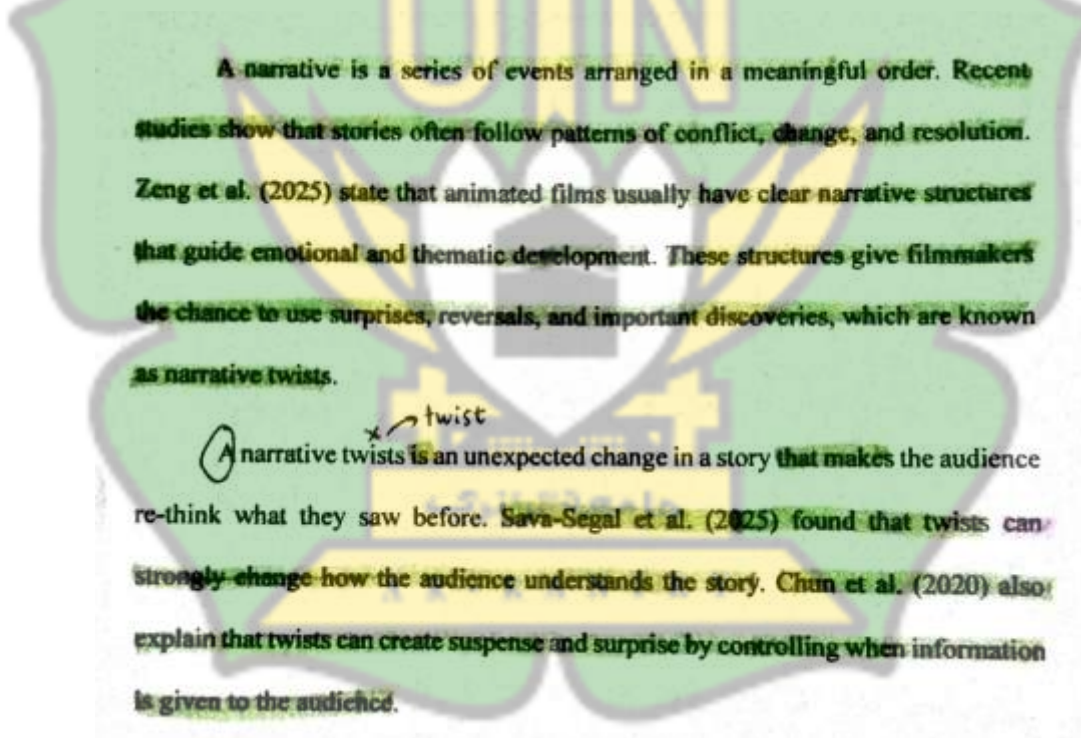


Figure 4.2 Example of Present Simple usage (Thesis T13, Chapter I, p. 1)

In the excerpt above, the student repeatedly used the Present Simple (e.g., “A narrative is...”, “studies show...”, “Zeng et al. (2025) state...”, “structures give...”).

These verbs are used to present definitions, general statements, and references to previous studies.

An authentic example of Past Simple usage is shown in the following excerpt taken from Thesis T14 (Chapter III, p. 30):

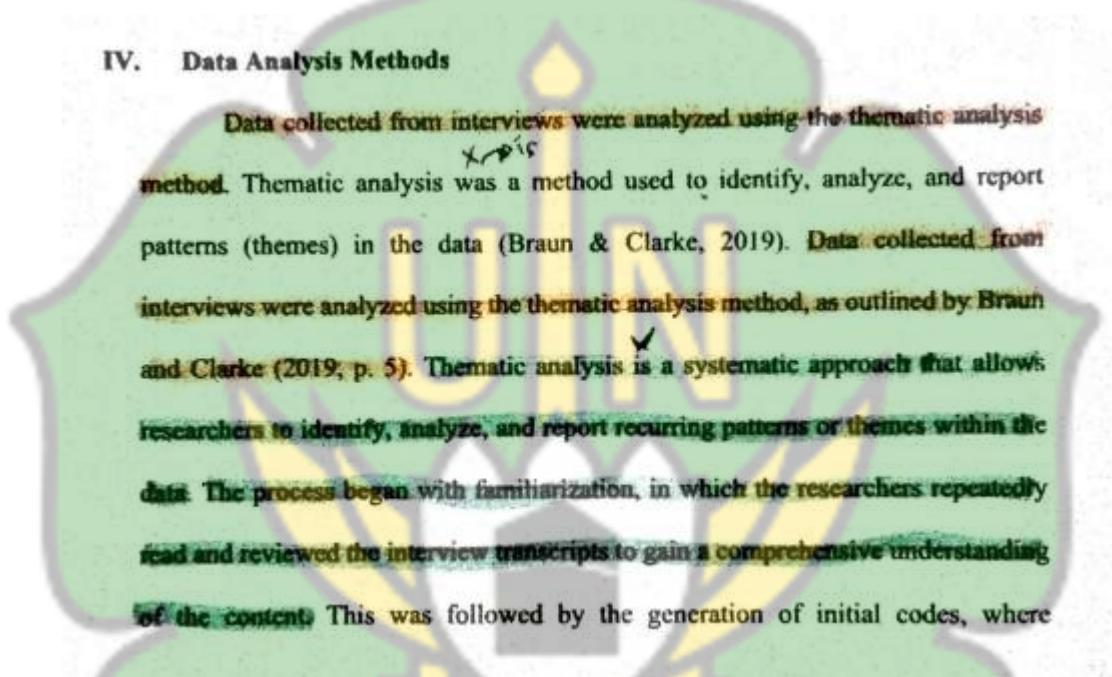


Figure 4.3 Example of Past Simple usage (Thesis T14, Chapter III, p. 30)

In this excerpt, the student used the Past Simple to describe research procedures that had already been completed (e.g., “Data collected from interviews were analyzed...”, “The process began with familiarization...”) indicate actions that had been completed prior to the writing of the thesis.

These examples support the quantitative findings that Present Simple and Past Simple were the two most dominant tenses used by the students.

2. Distribution of English Tenses Across Thesis Sections

The distribution of English tenses across the five main sections of the BA theses was examined to identify how different verb forms were used in each chapter. The second research question examined how these tenses were distributed across the five main chapters of the theses. Table 4.2 presents the frequency and percentage of each tense type in Chapter I (Introduction), Chapter II (Literature Review), Chapter III (Methodology), Chapter IV (Findings and Discussion), and Chapter V (Conclusion).

Table 4.2
Distribution of English Tenses Across Different Sections of the Theses

Types of Tense	Chapter I	Chapter II	Chapter III	Chapter IV	Chapter V	Total
Present Simple	622	710	270	707	434	2,743
Past Simple	86	153	318	324	157	1,038
Present Perfect	53	37	1	12	3	106
Past Perfect	0	0	2	2	3	7
Present Continuous	4	0	0	1	0	5
Future Simple	34	1	40	2	5	82
Modal Constructions	52	38	6	23	162	281

The distribution of the identified forms varied across the five thesis chapters. Present Simple was the most frequently used form in Chapters I, II, IV, and V, accounting for 73.09%, 75.61%, 66.01%, and 56.81% of the forms identified in each chapter, respectively. In contrast, Past Simple was the most frequent form in Chapter III, accounting for 49.92%. Modal Constructions were particularly prominent in Chapter V, where they accounted for 21.20% of the forms identified in that chapter.

Present Perfect occurred mainly in Chapters I and II, accounting for 6.23% and 3.94%, respectively, but represented only 0.16% in Chapter III and 0.28% in Chapter V. Past Perfect was found only in Chapters III, IV, and V, accounting for 0.31%, 0.19%, and 0.39%, respectively. Present Continuous occurred only in Chapters I and IV, accounting for 0.47% and 0.09%, respectively. Future Simple appeared most frequently in Chapter III (6.28%), followed by Chapter I (4.00%).

Overall, the distribution shows that the use of tense and modal constructions varied across the five thesis chapters. Present Simple dominated Chapters I, II, IV, and V, whereas Past Simple dominated Chapter III. Modal Constructions were particularly prominent in Chapter V.

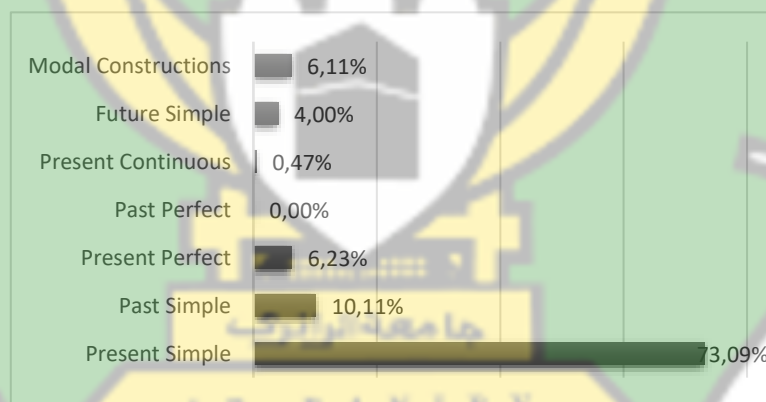


Figure 4.4 Distribution of English Tense Used in Chapter I (Introduction)

In Chapter I (Introduction), Present Simple appeared most frequently, with 622 occurrences (73.09%), followed by Past Simple with 86 occurrences (10.11%). Present Perfect occurred 53 times (6.23%), while Modal Constructions appeared 52 times

(6.11%). Future Simple occurred 34 times (4.00%), whereas Present Continuous was found only 4 times (0.47%). Past Perfect was not found in this chapter.

An authentic example of Present Simple usage in the Introduction section is shown in the following excerpt taken from Thesis T10 (Chapter I, p. 6):

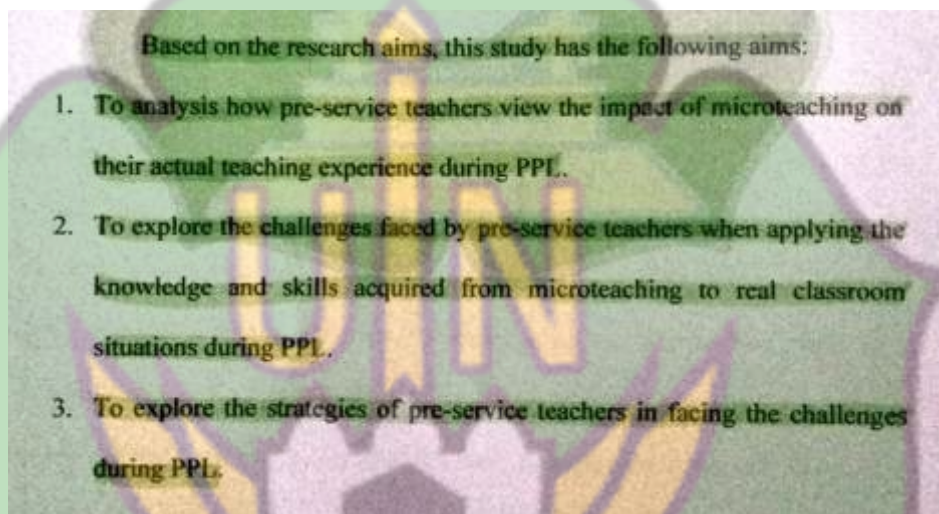


Figure 4.5 Example of tense usage in the Introduction (Thesis T10, Chapter I, p. 6)

In the excerpt above, the student used the Present Simple to state the aims of the study (e.g., “this study has the following aims”, “To explore...”).

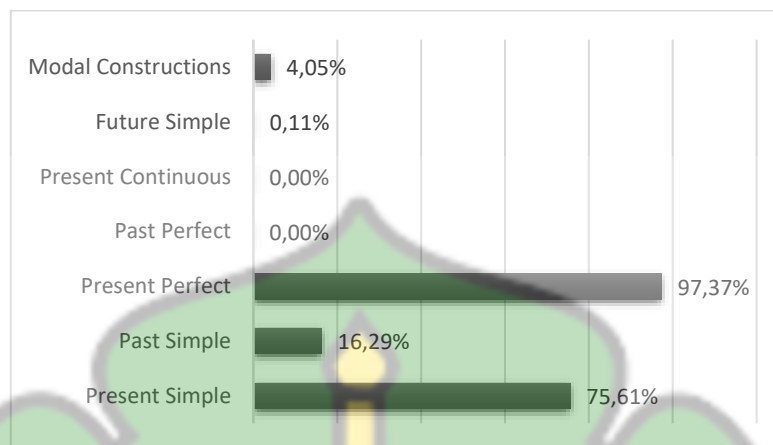


Figure 4.6 Distribution of English Tense Used in Chapter II (Literature Review)

In Chapter II (Literature Review), Present Simple remained the most frequently used form, with 710 occurrences (75.61%), followed by Past Simple with 153 occurrences (16.29%). Modal Constructions and Present Perfect occurred 38 times (4.05%) and 37 times (3.94%), respectively. Future Simple appeared only once (0.11%), while Past Perfect and Present Continuous were not found in this chapter.

An authentic example of Present Simple usage in the Literature Review section is shown in the following excerpt taken from Thesis T06 (Chapter II, p. 8):

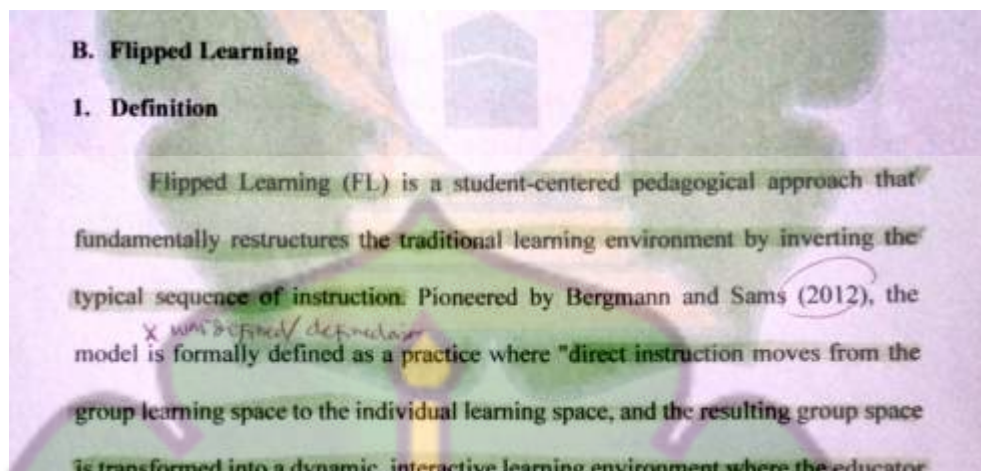


Figure 4.7 Example of tense usage in the Literature Review (Thesis T06, Chapter II, p. 8)

In the excerpt above, the student used the Present Simple to define a concept and present established knowledge (e.g., “Flipped Learning (FL) is a student-centered pedagogical approach...”, “the model is formally defined as...”).

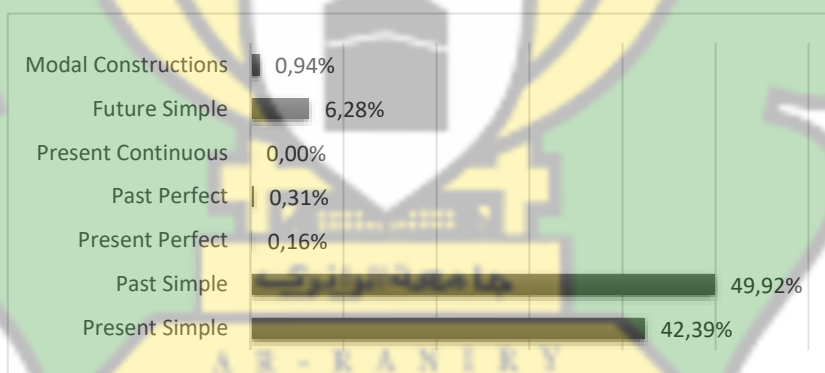


Figure 4.8 Distribution of English Tense Used in Chapter III (Methodology)

In Chapter III (Methodology), Past Simple was the most frequently used form, with 318 occurrences (49.92%), followed by Present Simple with 270 occurrences (42.39%). Future Simple occurred 40 times (6.28%), while Modal Constructions appeared 6 times (0.94%). Past Perfect and Present Perfect were found only twice

(0.31%) and once (0.16%), respectively. Present Continuous was not found in this chapter.

An authentic example of Past Simple usage in the Methodology section is shown in the following excerpt taken from Thesis T02 (Chapter III, p. 24):

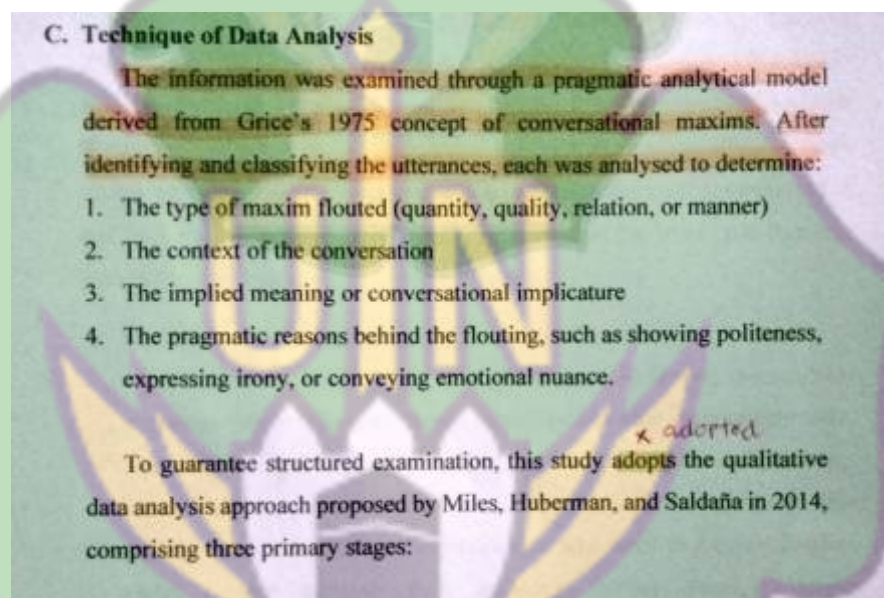


Figure 4.9 Example of tense usage in the Methodology (Thesis T02, Chapter III, p. 24)

In the excerpt above, the student used the Past Simple to describe the data analysis procedures that had already been carried out (e.g., “The information was examined...”, “each was analysed...”).

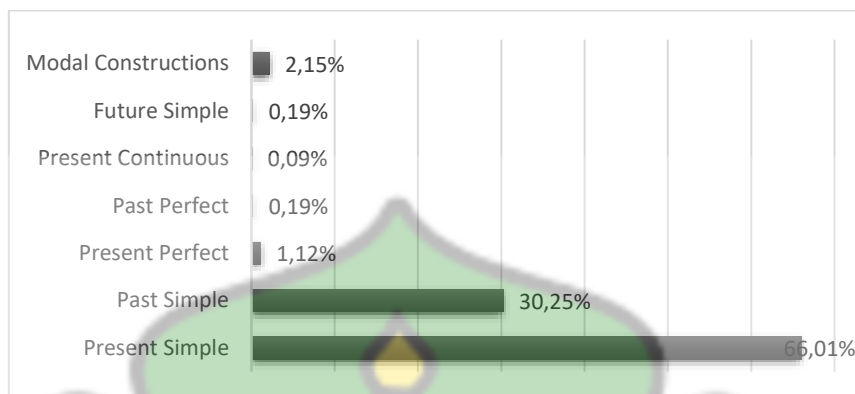


Figure 4.10 Distribution of English Tense Used in Chapter IV (Findings and Discussion)

In Chapter IV (Findings and Discussion), Present Simple was again the most frequently used form, with 707 occurrences (66.01%), followed by Past Simple with 324 occurrences (30.25%). Modal Constructions occurred 23 times (2.15%), while Present Perfect appeared 12 times (1.12%). Past Perfect and Future Simple each occurred twice (0.19%), and Present Continuous appeared only once (0.09%).

An authentic example of Present Simple usage in the Findings and Discussion section is shown in the following excerpt taken from Thesis T01 (Chapter IV, p. 20):

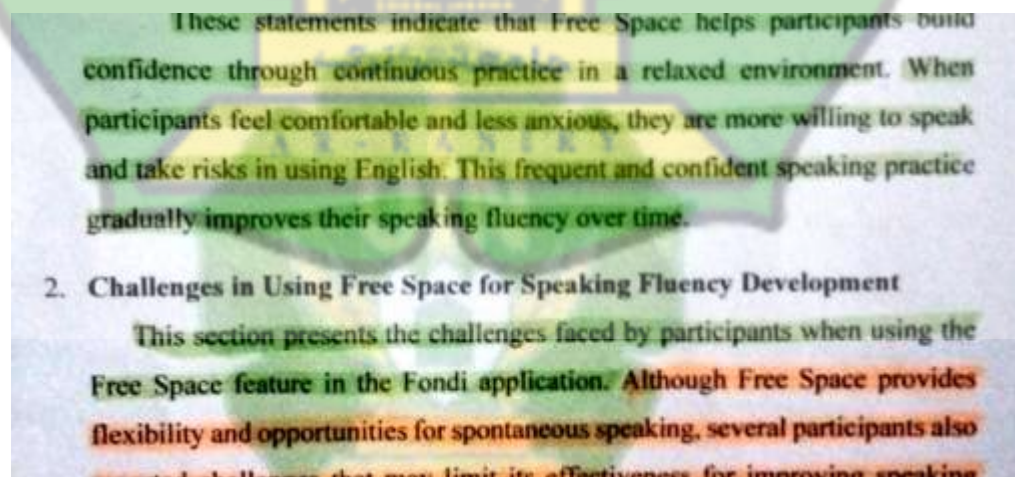


Figure 11 Example of tenses usage in the Findings and Discussion (Thesis T01, Chapter IV, p. 20)

In the excerpt above, the student used the Present Simple to interpret the findings and discuss their implications (e.g., “These statements indicate...”, “Free Space helps...”, “participants feel...”, “practice improves...”). Some Past Simple forms also appear when referring to specific data from the participants.

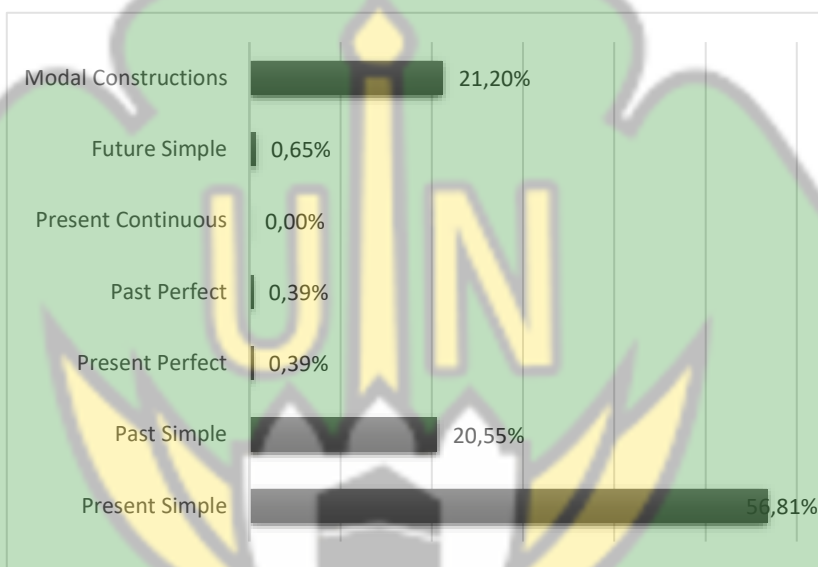


Figure 4.12 Distribution of English Tense Used in Chapter V (Conclusion and Suggestions)

In Chapter V (Conclusion), Present Simple remained the most frequently used form, with 434 occurrences (56.81%), followed by Past Simple with 157 occurrences (20.55%) and Modal Constructions with 162 occurrences (21.20%). Future Simple occurred 5 times (0.65%), while Present Perfect and Past Perfect each appeared 3 times (0.39%). Present Continuous was not found in this chapter.

An authentic example of Present Simple usage in the Conclusion section is shown in the following excerpt taken from Thesis T09 (Chapter V, p. 54):

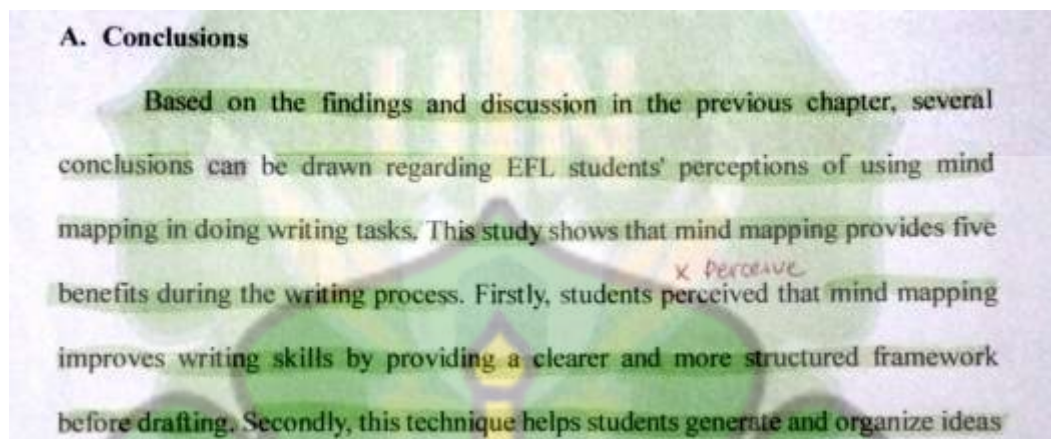


Figure 4.13 Example of tenses usage in the Conclusion (Thesis T09, Chapter V, p. 54)

In the excerpt above, the student mainly used the Present Simple to summarize the findings and state the conclusions of the study (e.g., “This study shows...”, “mind mapping provides...”, “improves...”, “helps...”). Modal verbs also appear when giving recommendations or expressing possibility.

Overall, the distribution of tenses across the five chapters shows clear section-specific preferences. Present Simple was predominant in Chapters I, II, and IV, Past Simple was most frequent in Chapter III, and Modal verbs increased substantially in Chapter V.

3. Accuracy of English Tense Usage Across Thesis Chapters

The third research question addressed the accuracy of English tense usage in the BA theses written by EFL students. Accuracy was examined from two complementary perspectives: formal accuracy (the correctness of the verb form) and functional accuracy (the appropriateness of the tense according to the rhetorical purpose of the

section). A total of 4,023 sentences containing tense forms were identified and evaluated across the twenty theses.

Table 4.3
Overall Accuracy of English Tense Usage

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Accurate	2,965	73.70%
Inaccurate	1,058	26.30%*
Total	4,023	100%
<i>Breakdown of Inaccurate</i>		
Formal errors	329	31.10%
Functional errors	736	69.57%

Note: Percentages of formal and functional errors are based on 1,065 inaccurate instances. The total exceeds 1,058 because seven sentences contain both error types.

As shown in Table 4.3, the majority of tense usage instances (2,965 or 73.70%) were accurate, while 1,058 instances (26.30%) were inaccurate. Of the inaccurate cases, formal errors accounted for 329 instances (31.10%) and functional errors accounted for 736 instances (69.57%).

To obtain a more detailed picture of the students' tense accuracy, the 4,023 identified sentences were further examined according to the five main sections of the BA theses. Table 4.4 presents the distribution of accurate and inaccurate tense usage in each section.

Table 4.4
Distribution of Accurate and Inaccurate Tense Usage in Each Section

Section	Accurate	%	Inaccurate	%	Total
Chapter I – Introduction	733	85.53%	124	14.47%	857
Chapter II – Literature Review	708	77.72%	203	22.28%	911
Chapter III – Methodology	351	56.70%	268	43.30%	619
Chapter IV – Findings and Discussion	773	79.12%	204	20.88%	977

Chapter V – Conclusion	400	60.70%	259	39.30%	659
Total	2,965	73.70%	1,058	26.30%	4,023

To enhance clarity, the comparison of accuracy rates across chapters is illustrated in Figure 4.7

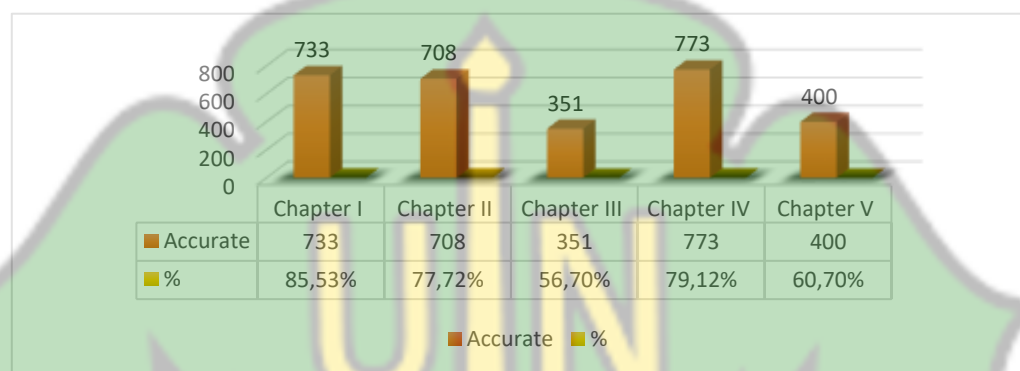


Figure 4.14 The Comparison of Accuracy Rates Across Sections

As shown in Figure 4.7, the accuracy of English tense usage varied considerably across the different chapters of the theses. The highest accuracy rate was recorded in Chapter I (Introduction) at 85.53%, followed by Chapter IV (Findings and Discussion) at 79.12% and Chapter II (Literature Review) at 77.72%. In contrast, Chapter III (Methodology) showed the lowest accuracy (56.70%), while Chapter V (Conclusion) also demonstrated a relatively low accuracy rate of 60.70%.

The inaccurate tense instances were further classified into two main categories: formal errors and functional errors. Formal errors refer to incorrect verb forms or tense structures, while functional errors refer to the use of a grammatically correct tense that does not match the rhetorical purpose of the section. Table 4.5 presents the distribution of these error types.

Table 4.5
Types of Tense Errors Found in the Theses

Type of Error	Frequency	Percentage
Formal Errors	329	31.10%
Functional Errors	736	69.57%
Total Inaccurate	1,065*	100%

Note: The total number of formal and functional errors (1,065) exceeds the total number of inaccurate instances (1,058) because 7 sentences contained both formal and functional errors simultaneously.

As shown in Table 4.5, functional errors constituted the majority of the inaccurate tense usage (736 instances or 69.57%), while formal errors accounted for a smaller proportion (329 instances or 31.10%).

It should be noted that the total number of formal and functional errors (1,065) is slightly higher than the total number of inaccurate instances (1,058). This difference occurred because seven sentences contained both formal and functional errors simultaneously. In such cases, the sentence was counted as one inaccurate instance, while both error types were recorded.

To provide a more detailed picture of the nature of tense errors, the formal and functional errors were also calculated for each thesis section.

Table 4.6
The distribution of both error types across Chapter I to Chapter V

Section	Formal Errors	%	Functional Errors	%
Chapter I – Introduction	96	77.42%	29	23.39%
Chapter II – Literature Review	86	42.36%	121	59.61%
Chapter III – Methodology	78	29.10%	192	71.64%
Chapter IV – Findings and Discussion	47	23.04%	157	76.96%
Chapter V – Conclusion	22	8.49%	237	91.51%

Total	329	31.10%	736	69.57%
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The proportions of error types are further visualised in Figure 4.8

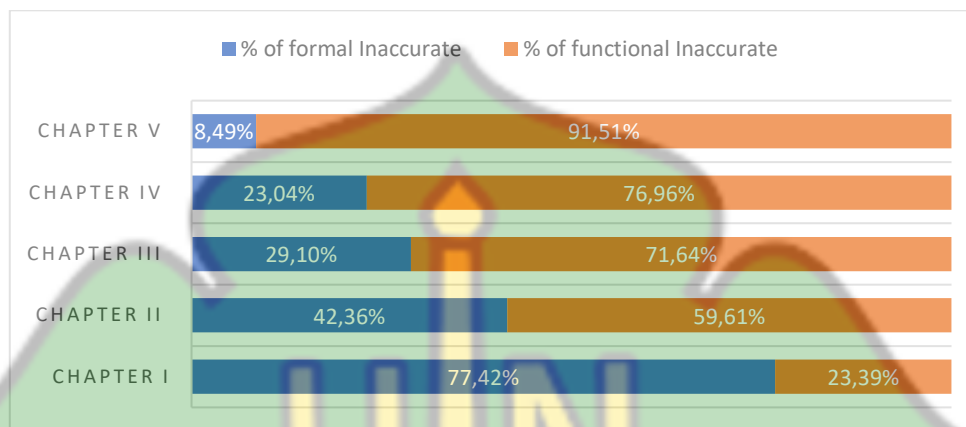


Figure 4.15 Proportions of Error Types Across Sections

The data indicate that functional errors outnumbered formal errors in four of the five chapters. The only exception was Chapter I (Introduction), where formal errors were more frequent (96 instances or 77.42%) than functional errors (29 instances or 23.39%). In the remaining chapters, functional errors dominated. The proportion of functional errors increased progressively from Chapter II (59.61%) to Chapter V (91.51%). Chapter V (Conclusion) showed the highest percentage of functional errors (91.51%), while Chapter III (Methodology) and Chapter IV (Findings and Discussion) also recorded high proportions of functional errors (71.64% and 76.96%, respectively). Overall, the data indicate that functional errors remained the dominant type of inaccuracy across most sections of the theses, particularly in the later chapters.

To illustrate the nature of these errors, authentic examples from the students' theses are presented below.

An authentic example of a functional error is shown in the following excerpt taken from Thesis T15 (Chapter III, p. 22):

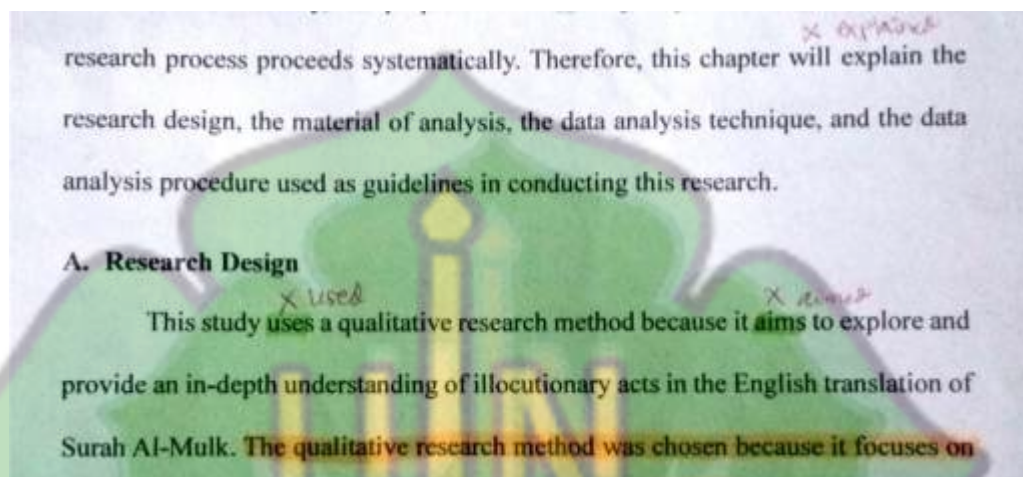


Figure 4.16 Example of Functional Error (Thesis T15, Chapter III, p. 22)

In this excerpt, the student used Present Simple and Future forms (e.g., “this chapter will explain”, “This study uses”) to describe the research methodology. Although the verb forms are mostly correct, the choice of tense is less appropriate for reporting procedures that have already been completed. According to Table 2.1, Past Simple is preferred in the Methodology section. Therefore, this is classified as a functional error.

An example of a formal error is shown in the following excerpt taken from Thesis T15 (Chapter III, p. 22):

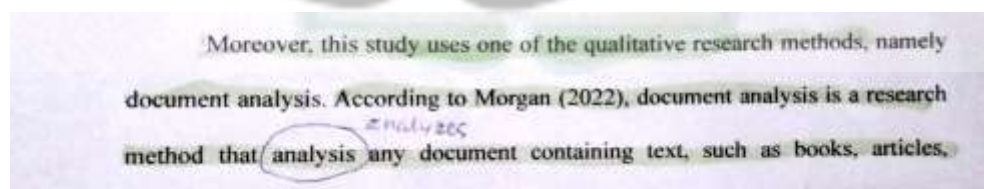


Figure 4.17 Example of Formal Error (Thesis T15, Chapter III, p. 22)

In this sentence, the student wrote “a research method that analysis any document...”. The verb form is incorrect; it should be “analyses” (subject-verb agreement). This is classified as a formal error.

An example of a mixed error (formal + functional) is shown in the following excerpt taken from Thesis T08 (Chapter II, p. 18):

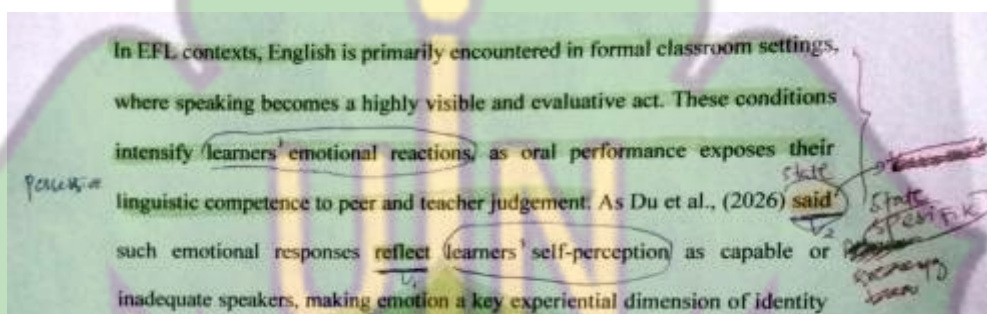


Figure 4.18 Example of Mixed Error (Thesis T08, Chapter II, p. 18)

In this excerpt, there is a formal issue in the phrase “learners emotional reactions” (missing possessive form), and the use of Past Simple “said” when citing a source is less conventional than Present Simple, which is more commonly used in the Literature Review. This sentence contains both formal and functional weaknesses.

In summary, the analysis of tense accuracy revealed that 73.70% of the tense instances in the BA theses were accurate, while 26.30% were inaccurate. Among the inaccurate instances, functional errors (69.57%) were substantially more frequent than formal errors (31.10%). The accuracy rate varied across sections, with Chapter I showing the highest accuracy (85.53%) and Chapter III the lowest (56.70%). Functional errors dominated in most chapters, particularly in Chapter V, where they accounted for 91.51% of the inaccuracies.

Overall, the findings suggest that tense accuracy was generally higher than inaccuracy across the twenty theses. The distribution of error types, however, showed a greater occurrence of functional errors than formal errors, particularly in the later chapters. This pattern highlights the importance of considering tense use in relation to the rhetorical purposes of different thesis sections.

B. Discussion

This section discusses the findings of the study in relation to the three research questions formulated in Chapter I. The discussion aims to interpret the patterns of English tense usage found in the EFL students' undergraduate theses, examine how these tenses are distributed across different chapters, and evaluate the accuracy of their use. The results are also compared and contrasted with previous studies in order to highlight similarities, differences, and possible explanations for the observed patterns.

The first research question explored the types of English tense forms identified in the 20 BA theses written by EFL students. The analysis of 4,023 sentences containing tense forms revealed seven tense or modal categories: Present Simple, Past Simple, Modal Constructions, Present Perfect, Future Simple, Past Perfect, and Present Continuous. Present Simple was the most frequently identified form, accounting for 2,743 instances (64.36%), followed by Past Simple with 1,038 instances (24.35%). Modal Constructions occurred 281 times (6.59%), while Present Perfect accounted for 106 instances (2.49%). Future Simple occurred 82 times (1.92%), whereas Past Perfect

and Present Continuous were identified less frequently, with 7 (0.16%) and 5 instances (0.12%), respectively.

This heavy reliance on Present Simple and Past Simple is consistent with the conventional patterns of academic writing. As noted by Swales and Feak (2012) and Caplan (2012), these two tenses typically dominate research writing because they fulfil the most essential rhetorical functions, such as presenting general truths, reporting previous research, and describing completed procedures. The strong presence of Present Simple in the present study also supports the findings of Pratama Sari et al. (2023), who observed that EFL students tend to favour Simple Present when establishing background knowledge and referring to existing literature.

At the same time, the notably low frequency of Present Perfect (2.49%) deserves attention. Although Swales and Feak (2012) and Wallwork (2011) emphasise the importance of Present Perfect for linking previous studies to the current research and for signalling ongoing relevance, the students in this study used it only sparingly. This pattern may suggest that students relied more heavily on the two more familiar forms when constructing their academic texts, a difficulty that has also been reported among Indonesian EFL learners by Listyani and Al-Kadi (2022).

Overall, the findings suggest that while the students were able to employ the core tenses expected in academic writing, their tense repertoire remained relatively narrow. The overwhelming preference for Present Simple and Past Simple, coupled with the limited use of Present Perfect and other forms, indicates a tendency to rely on safer and more familiar options. This pattern is in line with Romadhon (2021), who found that

EFL students often depend on a restricted range of tenses when producing academic texts.

The second research question examined how English tenses were distributed across the five main chapters of the bachelor's theses. The distribution showed clear differences across chapters. Present Simple was the most frequently used form in Chapters I, II, IV, and V, with 622 (73.09%), 710 (75.61%), 707 (66.01%), and 434 (56.81%) occurrences. In Chapter III, however, Past Simple was the most frequent form, with 318 (46.7%) occurrences. Modal Constructions were particularly prominent in Chapter V, where they occurred 162 times (23.4%). Present Perfect occurred mainly in Chapters I and II, with 53 and 37 instances, respectively, but was rarely used in the remaining chapters. Future Simple was most frequent in Chapter III (40 instances) and Chapter I (34 instances). Past Perfect occurred only in Chapters III, IV, and V, while Present Continuous appeared only in Chapters I and IV.

These distributional patterns largely align with the conventional rhetorical expectations of academic writing. As outlined by Caplan (2012) and Wallwork (2011), Present Simple is typically preferred in the Introduction and Literature Review for presenting background information, defining concepts, and referring to established knowledge. The high frequency of Present Simple in Chapters I and II in the present study supports this convention. Similarly, the shift toward Past Simple in Chapter III is consistent with the recommended use of past tense for describing completed research procedures, a pattern also noted by Swales and Feak (2012) and Pratama Sari et al. (2023).

The increased use of Modal verbs in Chapter V further reflects conventional practice. Wallwork (2011) notes that modal constructions are commonly employed in the Conclusion to offer recommendations and suggest directions for future research. The relatively high proportion of modals in this section (23.4%) indicates that the students were generally aware of this rhetorical function.

However, some patterns deviate from the expected norms. Although Present Perfect is recommended for linking previous research to the current study, particularly in the Introduction and Literature Review (Swales & Feak, 2012; Wallwork, 2011), its frequency remained low across all chapters. This underuse suggests that the students may have had limited awareness of the rhetorical role of Present Perfect, a difficulty previously observed among Indonesian EFL learners (Listyani & Al-Kadi, 2022). In addition, the continued presence of Present Simple in Chapter III (38.4%), despite the dominance of Past Simple, indicates that some students still mixed tenses when describing methodological procedures.

Overall, the distribution of tenses across chapters shows that the students generally followed the broad rhetorical conventions of thesis writing. At the same time, the limited use of Present Perfect and the occasional mixing of tenses in the Methodology section suggest that their control of section-specific tense choices was not yet fully consistent. These findings support earlier observations that EFL students tend to rely on a restricted set of familiar tenses while underusing forms that require greater rhetorical awareness (Romadhon, 2021).

The third research question investigated the accuracy of English tense usage in the BA theses written by EFL students. The analysis showed that 73.70% of the 4,023 sentences containing tense forms were accurate, while 26.30% were inaccurate. Within the identified error occurrences, functional errors were more frequent than formal errors, particularly in the later chapters. Accuracy also varied across chapters, with the highest rate found in Chapter I (85.53%) and the lowest in Chapter III (56.70%). The proportion of functional errors was highest in Chapter V, accounting for 91.51% of the error occurrences in that section.

These findings suggest that the students were generally able to produce accurate tense forms in a substantial proportion of the sentences examined. At the same time, the greater occurrence of functional errors indicates that tense use was not always aligned with the rhetorical purposes of particular thesis sections. This pattern was especially visible in the later chapters, where functional errors accounted for a larger proportion of the identified errors.

The variation in accuracy across chapters further reflects the different linguistic and rhetorical demands of each section. The relatively high accuracy rate in Chapter I may be related to the more conventional use of Present Simple for presenting background information and research aims (Caplan, 2012; Wallwork, 2011). In contrast, the lower accuracy observed in Chapter III may reflect the greater variation in tense choices required when describing research procedures and methodological information. The high proportion of functional errors in Chapter V also suggests that

tense selection may become more challenging when students move between summarizing findings and presenting recommendations.

These findings are consistent with previous studies emphasizing that appropriate tense use involves not only grammatical form but also awareness of rhetorical function in academic writing. Hyland (2009) and Swales and Feak (2012) highlight the relationship between tense choice and the communicative purposes of academic texts. Similarly, Listyani and Al-Kadi (2022) reported difficulties among Indonesian EFL learners in selecting contextually appropriate tense forms. The greater occurrence of functional errors in the present study further highlights the relevance of rhetorical awareness in academic thesis writing.

Overall, the results suggest that while the students demonstrated a relatively high level of tense accuracy across the twenty bachelor's theses. However, the distribution of error types indicates that functional aspects of tense use warrant particular attention, especially in sections with more complex rhetorical demands. These findings highlight the importance of developing students' awareness of how tense choices correspond to the communicative purposes of different sections in EFL academic writing.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

A. Conclusion

Based on the findings obtained from the analysis of 20 BA theses, the conclusions of this study are presented according to the three research questions as follows:

1. The types of English tense forms used

The findings reveal that EFL students predominantly relied on Present Simple and Past Simple. Present Simple was the most frequently used form, accounting for 64.36% of the total 4,023 sentences, followed by Past Simple at 24.35%. Modal Constructions accounted for 6.59%, while Present Perfect and Future Simple accounted for 2.49% and 1.92%, respectively. Past Perfect and Present Continuous were identified less frequently, accounting for 0.16% and 0.12%, respectively. These findings indicate that the students relied predominantly on Present Simple and Past Simple when writing their bachelor's theses.

2. The distribution across thesis sections

The use of tense forms varied across the five chapters. Present Simple was the most frequently used form in Chapter I (72.58%), Chapter II (77.94%), Chapter IV (72.36%), and Chapter V (65.86%), whereas Past Simple was the most frequent form in Chapter III (51.37%). Modal Constructions were particularly prominent in Chapter V, accounting for 24.58% of the tense forms in that chapter. Present Perfect occurred mainly in Chapters I and II, while Future Simple appeared most frequently in Chapters

III and I. Past Perfect and Present Continuous occurred only in a limited number of chapters. Overall, the distribution indicates that tense use varied according to the rhetorical purposes of the different thesis sections.

3. The accuracy of tense usage

The analysis shows that 73.70% of the tense instances are accurate, while 26.30% contain errors. Functional errors (69.57%) substantially outnumber formal errors (31.10%), indicating that the students' main difficulty lies in selecting the appropriate tense according to the rhetorical purpose of each section rather than in forming the verb correctly. Accuracy is highest in the Introduction (85.53%) and lowest in the Methodology (56.70%). The proportion of functional errors increases progressively toward the later sections, reaching 91.51% in the Conclusion. These findings suggest that while the students have developed relatively sound morphological control of English tenses, they still struggle with the discourse conventions governing tense choice in academic writing.

B. Suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, several suggestions are proposed for students, lecturers, and future researchers:

1. EFL students are encouraged to develop a stronger awareness of the rhetorical functions of English tenses in academic writing. While many students demonstrate adequate control of tense morphology, they still frequently select tenses that do not match the conventional purposes of each thesis section. Students should therefore pay

closer attention to tense choice, particularly in the Methodology, Findings and Discussion, and Conclusion sections, as well as explicitly review model theses and academic writing guidelines that highlight appropriate tense usage in each chapter in order to improve both accuracy and consistency.

2. Lecturers and academic writing instructors are recommended to place greater emphasis on the discourse-level functions of tenses rather than focusing solely on grammatical forms. Teaching materials and classroom activities should include explicit instruction on how tenses are conventionally used across different sections of a BA thesis, supported by clear examples, guided practice, and targeted feedback on functional tense errors to help reduce the high proportion of inappropriate tense selection identified in this study.

3. Future researchers are encouraged to address several limitations of this study, including the relatively small sample of only 20 BA theses from a single university and one academic year, the exclusive use of quantitative document analysis without exploring the underlying reasons for functional tense errors, and the absence of examination of other potential factors such as students' writing proficiency, prior academic writing training, and first language influence. Based on these limitations, future researchers should conduct similar studies with a larger number of theses across different universities to obtain more generalizable findings. They may also employ mixed methods by combining quantitative analysis with qualitative approaches such as student interviews to investigate the causes of functional tense errors, and could

examine the relationship between tense accuracy and other variables including writing proficiency level, previous academic writing training, and first language influence.

Overall, these suggestions can contribute to the improvement of EFL students' academic writing skills, particularly in the accurate and appropriate use of English tenses in BA theses.



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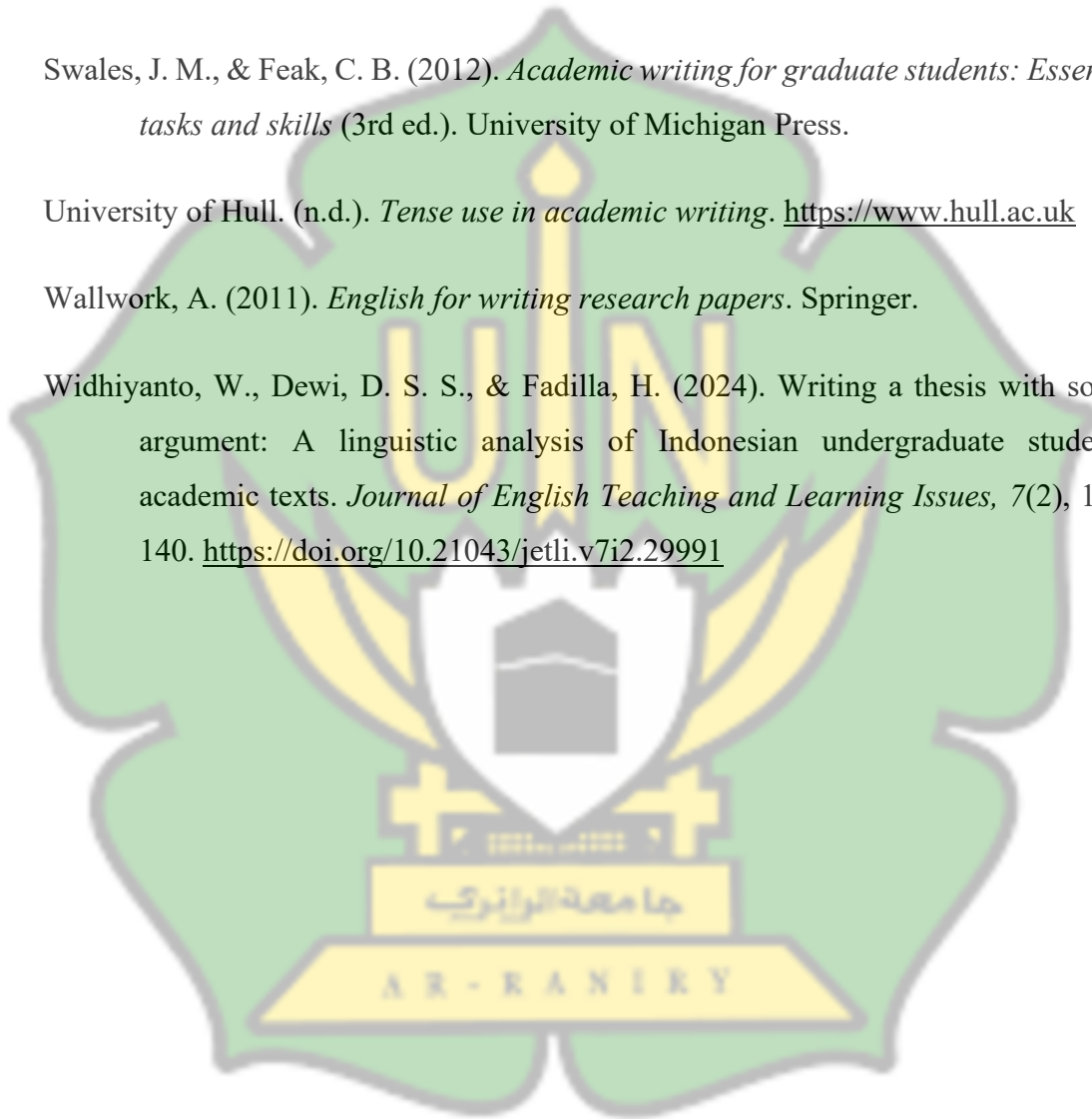
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Appointment Letter of Supervisor



KEPUTUSAN DEKAN FAKULTAS TARBIYAH DAN KEGURUAN UIN AR-RANIRY BANDA ACEH
NOMOR: 767 TAHUN 2026

TENTANG:
PENGANGKATAN PEMBIMBING SKRIPSI MAHASISWA
DENGAN RAHMAT TUHAN YANG MAHA ESA

DEKAN FAKULTAS TARBIYAH DAN KEGURUAN UIN AR-RANIRY BANDA ACEH

Menimbang

- bahwa untuk kelancaran pembinaan skripsi mahasiswa pada Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh maka dipandang perlu menunjuk pembimbing skripsi;
- bahwa yang namanya tersebut dalam Surat Keputusan ini dianggap cakap dan mampu untuk diangkat dalam jabatan sebagai pembimbing skripsi mahasiswa;
- bahwa berdasarkan pertimbangan sebagaimana dimaksud dalam huruf a dan huruf b, perlu menetapkan Keputusan Dekan Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh.

Mengingat

- Undang-Undang Nomor 20 Tahun 2003, tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional;
- Undang-Undang Nomor 14 Tahun 2005, tentang Guru dan Dosen;
- Undang-Undang Nomor 12 Tahun 2012, tentang Pendidikan Tinggi;
- Peraturan Presiden Nomor 74 Tahun 2012, tentang perubahan atas peraturan pemerintah RI Nomor 23 Tahun 2005 tentang pengelolaan keuangan badan layanan umum;
- Peraturan Pemerintah Nomor 4 Tahun 2014, tentang penyelenggaraan Pendidikan Tinggi dan Pengelolaan Perguruan Tinggi;
- Peraturan Presiden Nomor 04 Tahun 2013, tentang perubahan Institut Agama Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh menjadi Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh;
- Peraturan Menteri Agama RI Nomor 44 Tahun 2022, tentang Organisasi dan Tata Kerja UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh;
- Peraturan Menteri Agama Nomor 14 Tahun 2022, tentang Statuta UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh;
- Keputusan Menteri Agama Nomor 492 Tahun 2003, tentang Pemberian Wewenang Pengangkatan, Pemindahan dan Pemberhentian PNS di Lingkungan Departemen Agama;
- Keputusan Menteri Keuangan Nomor 263/KM.06/2011, tentang penetapan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh pada Kementerian Agama sebagai instansi Pemerintah yang menerapkan Pengelolaan Badan Layanan Umum;
- Surat Keputusan Rektor UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh Nomor 01 Tahun 2015, Tentang Pendelegasian Wewenang kepada Dekan dan Direktur Pascasarjana di Lingkungan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh.

MEMUTUSKAN

Menetapkan

KESATU

Menunjuk Saudara:
Prof. Jarani Usman, S.Ag., S.S., M.Soc., Ph.D.

Untuk membimbing Skripsi

Nama : **Nada Sakhalda**
 NIM : **210201006**
 Program Studi : **Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris**
 Judul Skripsi : **EFL Students' Use of English Tenses Across Different Sections of Their Bachelor's Theses**

KEDUA

Kepada pembimbing yang bersangkutan namanya status diberikan honorarium sesuai dengan peraturan perundang-undangan yang berlaku.

KETIGA

Pembiayaan akibat keputusan ini dibebankan pada DIPA UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh Nomor SP DIPA-025.04.2.423625-2026 Tanggal 01 Desember 2026 Tahun Anggaran 2026.

KEEMPAT

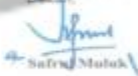
Keputusan ini berlaku selama enam bulan sejak tanggal ditetapkan.

KELIMA

Keputusan ini berlaku sejak tanggal ditetapkan dengan ketentuan bahwa segala sesuatu akan diubah dan diperbaiki kembali sebagaimana mestinya, apabila kelanjutan bahwa segala sesuatu akan diubah dan diperbaiki kembali sebagaimana mestinya, apabila kelanjutan hari ternyata terdapat kekeliruan dalam Surat Keputusan ini.

Ditetapkan di : **Banda Aceh**
 Pada tanggal : **01 Juli 2026**

Dekan


Saifur Muluk



Penyusunan:
 1. Kepala Kementerian Agama RI di Banda Aceh
 2. Direktur Pendidikan Islam Kementerian Agama RI di Banda Aceh
 3. Direktur Perguruan Tinggi Islam Kementerian Agama RI di Banda Aceh
 4. Kepala Pusat Penelitian dan Pengembangan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh
 5. Kepala Badan Keuangan dan Akademi UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh di Banda Aceh
 6. Yang bersangkutan
 7. Ditujukan
 8. Ditujukan

Appendix B: List of the Selected BA Theses

NO	CODE	AUTHOR	TITLE	YEAR
1	T01	DM	THE PERCEIVED BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF USING FONDI APPLICATION ON ENGLISH PARTICIPANTS' FLUENCY IN SPEAKING ENGLISH	2026
2	T02	NS	A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF FLOUTING GRICEAN MAXIMS IN "BILA ESOK IBU TIADA" FILM	2026
3	T03	RC	THE IMPACT OF ANIMATED VIDEOS ON STUDENTS' VOCABULARY ACQUISITION OF EFL STUDENTS	2026
4	T04	MR	EFL STUDENTS' PERCEIVED IMPACT OF USING ROLE-PLAYING GAME ON THEIR READING SKILL DEVELOPMENT	2026
5	T05	MM	A SOCIOLINGUISTICS LOOK AT GENDER IN <i>FURY ROAD</i> AND <i>THE LIGHTNING THIEF</i> A FILM BY GEORGE MILLER AND CHRIS COLUMBUS.	2026
6	T06	AR	EFL STUDENTS' PERCEIVED IMPACT OF THE INFLUENCE OF FLIPPED LEARNING ON THEIR ENGLISH SPEAKING PROFICIENCY	2026
7	T07	AM	THE PERCEIVED IMPACTS OF PARTICIPATION IN THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENT ASSOCIATION (EDSA) ON STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT	2026
8	T08	AK	CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY THROUGH SPOKEN ENGLISH: SELFPERCEPTION OF INDONESIAN EFL LEARNERS IN ORAL COMMUNICATION	2026
9	T09	NR	EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE USE OF MIND MAPPING IN DOING WRITING TASK	2026
10	T10	TN	THE IMPACT OF MICROTEACHING ON ENGLISH TEACHERS' CLASSROOM PRACTICE DURING TEACHING PRACTICUM PROGRAM (PPL	2026
11	T11	AZ	THE ROLE OF ENGLISH IN THE FORMATION OF GEN Z'S IDENTITY IN DIGITAL ER	2026
12	T12	UL	CODE SWITCHING IN SIDANG MUNAQASYAH: LECTURERS' VOICES	2026
13	T13	RA	IDENTIFYING AND CATEGORIZING NARRATIVE TWISTS: A STUDY OF PLOT STRUCTURE IN DISNEY'S ZOOTOPIA	2026
14	T14	SM	THE ROLE OF CULTURAL BACKGROUND IN SHAPING THE COMMUNICATION STYLES OF EFL STUDENTS	2026
15	T15	SL	PRAGMATICS ANALYSIS OF ILLOCUTIONARY ACTS IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF QURAN SURAH AL-MULK	2026
16	T16	QA	CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL TRANSITIONS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF INDONESIAN STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES IN AUSTRALIA AND ACEH	2026

CHAPTER IV

CHAPTER V

[illegible]

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet titled "Project Management". The ribbon at the top includes tabs for Home, Insert, Page Layout, Formulas, Data, Review, View, and Help. The spreadsheet contains a table with the following columns: Project Name, Project Status, Project Budget, and Project Manager. The data is organized into 10 rows of project entries.

Project Name	Project Status	Project Budget	Project Manager
Project A: New product development	On Track	\$1,200,000	John Doe
Project B: Marketing campaign launch	Delayed	\$800,000	Jane Smith
Project C: IT system upgrade	On Track	\$500,000	Mike Johnson
Project D: Customer service portal	On Track	\$300,000	Sarah Lee
Project E: Research and development	On Track	\$2,500,000	David Brown
Project F: Sales training program	On Track	\$150,000	Emily White
Project G: HR recruitment drive	On Track	\$75,000	Chris Green
Project H: Compliance audit	On Track	\$200,000	Alex Black
Project I: Logistics optimization	On Track	\$900,000	Olivia Grey
Project J: Sustainability initiative	On Track	\$600,000	Noah Blue

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

Appendix D: Samples of Original Data (Highlighted Excerpts)

A narrative is a series of events arranged in a meaningful order. Research studies show that stories often follow patterns of conflict, change, and resolution. Zeng et al. (2025) state that animated films usually have clear narrative structures that guide emotional and thematic development. These structures give filmmakers the chance to use surprises, reversals, and important discoveries, which are known as narrative twists.

A narrative twist is an unexpected change in a story that makes the audience re-think what they saw before. Silva-Sagat et al. (2025) found that twists can strongly change how the audience understands the story. Chin et al. (2020) also explain that twists can create suspense and surprise by controlling when information is given to the audience.

Present Simple usage (Thesis T13, Chapter I, p. 1)

Based on the research aims, this study has the following aims:

1. To analyze how pre-service teachers view the impact of microteaching on their actual teaching experiences during PPL.
2. To explore the challenges faced by pre-service teachers when applying the knowledge and skills acquired from microteaching to real classroom situations during PPL.
3. To explore the strategies of pre-service teachers in facing the challenges during PPL.

Example of tense usage in the Introduction

C. Technique of Data Analysis

The information was examined through a pragmatic analytical model derived from Grice's 1975 concept of conversational maxims. After identifying and classifying the utterances, each was analysed to determine:

1. The type of maxim flouted (quantity, quality, relation, or manner).
2. The context of the conversation.
3. The implied meaning or conversational implicature.
4. The pragmatic reasons behind the flouting, such as showing politeness, expressing irony, or conveying emotional nuance.

To guarantee structured examination, this study adopts the qualitative data analysis approach proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña in 2014, comprising three primary stages:

Example of tense usage in the Methodology

A. Conclusions

Based on the findings and discussion in the previous chapter, several conclusions can be drawn regarding EFL students' perceptions of using mind mapping in doing writing tasks. This study shows that mind mapping provides free benefits during the writing process. Firstly, students perceived that mind mapping improves writing skills by providing a clearer and more structured framework before drafting. Secondly, this technique helps students generate and organize ideas

Example of tense usage in the Conclusion and suggestions

IV. Data Analysis Methods

Data collected from interviews were analyzed using the thematic analysis method. Thematic analysis was a method used to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Data obtained from interviews were analyzed using the thematic analysis method, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2019, p. 5). Thematic analysis is a systematic approach that allows researchers to identify, analyze, and report recurring patterns or themes within the data. The process begins with identification, in which the researchers repeatedly read and reviewed the interview transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding of the content. This was followed by the generation of initial codes, where

Past Simple usage (Thesis T14, Chapter III, p. 30)

B. Flipped Learning

1. Definition

Flipped Learning (FL) is a student-centered pedagogical approach that fundamentally restructures the traditional learning environment by inverting the typical sequence of instruction. Pioneered by Bergmann and Sams (2012), the model is formally defined as a practice where "direct instruction moves from the group learning space to the individual learning space, and the resulting group space is transformed into a dynamic, interactive learning environment where the educator

Example of tense usage in the Literature Review

These statements indicate that Free Space helps participants boost confidence through continuous practice in a relaxed environment. When participants feel comfortable and less anxious, they are more willing to speak and take risks in using English. This frequent and confident speaking practice gradually improves their speaking fluency over time.

2. Challenges in Using Free Space for Speaking Fluency Development

This section presents the challenges faced by participants when using the Free Space feature in the Foni application. Although Free Space provides flexibility and opportunities for spontaneous speaking, several participants also reported challenges that may limit its effectiveness for immersive speaking

Example of tense usage in the Findings and Discussion

research process proceeds systematically. Therefore, this chapter will explain the research design, the material of analysis, the data analysis technique, and the data analysis procedure used as guidelines in conducting this research.

A. Research Design

This study uses a qualitative research method because it aims to explore and provide an in-depth understanding of illocutionary acts in the English translation of Sarah Al-Mulk. The qualitative research method was chosen because it focuses on

functional error

