

# Improving Students' Mastery of Simple Past Tense in Recount Text Writing through Game Based Learning

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**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan menulis teks recount pada siswa kelas X melalui penerapan metode Game-Based Learning (GBL) menggunakan permainan "Treasure Hunt". Berdasarkan observasi awal di kelas X-4 SMAN 20 Surabaya, ditemukan bahwa banyak siswa kesulitan dalam menggunakan simple past tense secara tepat dalam penulisan teks recount. Dari 35 siswa, sebanyak 62,86% (22 siswa) memperoleh nilai dibawah Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM). Penelitian ini menggunakan metode pendekatan Penelitian Tindakan Kelas yang terdiri dari empat tahap, yaitu perencanaan, pelaksanaan, observasi, dan refleksi dalam dua siklus. Pada siklus pertama hanya 51% siswa yang mencapai KKM. Namun, pada siklus kedua setelah diterapkannya GBL melalui permainan "Treasure Hunt", persentase siswa yang mencapai KKM meningkat drastis menjadi 97% dengan rata-rata nilai mencapai 91. Hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa GBL mampu menciptakan suasana belajar yang menyenangkan, meningkatkan motivasi, dan partisipasi aktif siswa, serta secara signifikan meningkatkan keterampilan menulis teks recount menggunakan simple past tense. Oleh karena itu, penerapan metode pembelajaran berbasis permainan direkomendasikan sebagai strategi alternatif dalam pengajaran bahasa Inggris, khususnya untuk meningkatkan kompetensi menulis.

**Katakunci:** simple past tense; menulis; teks recount; game-based learning

**Abstract:** This study aims to improve the recount text writing skills of tenth-grade students through the implementation of the Game-Based Learning (GBL) method using the "Treasure Hunt" game. Preliminary study conducted in class X-4 at SMAN 20 Surabaya revealed that many students experienced difficulties in accurately using the simple past tense in recount text writing. Out of 35 students, 62.86% (22 students) scored below the Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM). This research employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach, consisting of four stages: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection, conducted over two cycles. In the first cycle, only 51% of students met the KKM. However, in the second cycle, after the application of GBL through the "Treasure Hunt" game, the percentage of students who met the KKM significantly increased to 97%, with an average score of 91. These results indicate that GBL effectively creates an engaging learning environment, enhances students' motivation and active participation, and significantly improves their ability to write recount texts using the simple past tense. Therefore, the implementation of game-based learning is recommended as an alternative strategy in English language instruction, particularly for enhancing students' writing competence.

**Keyword:** simple past tense; writing; recount text; game-based learning

## INTRODUCTION

In English learning, there are four major skills that students must acquire, namely listening, reading, speaking and writing. These four skills are interconnected within the process of language use and learning. Since students often write down what they have learnt in order to remember it, writing can be regarded as a vital component of these skills for pupils. Through writing, students are able to recall previous lessons. The most important elements in writing include the use of graphology, language structure, and vocabulary (Kartika, 2018). Furthermore, good writing ability is crucial for students as it

lays the foundation for developing other language skills and supports academic achievement across various subjects. Writing skill is a highly necessary competence that must be learned. This is due to the fact that writing is one of the productive skills that results in a tangible output in the form of words, sentences, paragraphs, or texts (Harahap, 2022).

Based on the English subject matter taught to the students, Recount Text is one of the topics that must be learned by Grade X students. A recount text is defined as a type of text aimed at retelling past events in a structured chronological sequence (Melalolin et al., 2020). In other words, recount texts consist of narratives or past experiences that are conveyed coherently and sequentially. According to the curriculum learning outcomes, the instructional goal of teaching recount texts is closely related to developing reading comprehension and writing skills. In other words, writing proficiency is a crucial competence that students are expected to acquire when learning recount texts.

In the context of developing writing skills, Hyland (2003) emphasizes that writing is not merely the ability to produce words, but rather a complex cognitive process that involves an understanding of language structure, communicative purpose, and social context. Shinta (2021) further emphasizes that sentences serve as the basic units in forming coherent paragraphs. Each sentence plays a vital role in delivering the overall message, particularly in written discourse. The clarity and coherence of a sentence largely depend on its grammatical construction. Thus, grammar becomes a fundamental component of effective writing, as it enables the creation of meaningful and coherent sentences.

One essential aspect of grammar is the use of tenses, which function to indicate the sequence of events, actions, and conditions in a text. Panicker (2024) states that the appropriate use of tenses aids readers in understanding the temporal order and relationships between events. In addition, Jufrizal (2014), referenced in Listia & Febriyanti (2020), emphasizes that tenses are an essential component that EFL learners need to grasp. Students must be able to create sentences using the proper tense in order to clearly communicate their intended meaning because grammar and sentence construction are inextricably related.

In relation to writing recount texts, the use of the simple past tense is considered as important, as it represents one of the primary linguistic features of the genre. Recount texts aim to reconstruct past experiences by narrating events in the order in which they occurred. Therefore, use of the simple past tense is necessary to indicate that the narrated events have already taken place. Biber and Conrad (2009) affirm that the past tense plays a vital role in recounting experiences, developing characters, and organizing events chronologically. Without the use of the simple past tense, a text cannot be classified as a recount text, as it would fail to meet one of the genre's key linguistic criteria.

However, based on a preliminary observation conducted in a Grade X English class at SMAN 20 Surabaya, it was found that many students continue to struggle with constructing grammatically correct sentences, particularly in the use of subjects and verbs in the simple past tense. Although students have been introduced to the simple past

tense in prior instruction, they often fail to apply it properly in writing practices. One recurring error is the omission of the subject in a sentence, especially in the second or subsequent sentences within a paragraph. For example, a student might write, "Last night, I played football. won the game because good condition." While the general meaning remains somewhat understandable, this sentence is grammatically incorrect due to the absence of an explicit subject in the second sentence. Such errors not only hinder grammatical accuracy but also compromise the overall coherence and clarity of the text.

Furthermore, a preliminary study conducted by the researcher revealed that 22 out of 35 students (62.86%) scored below the minimum mastery criterion (KKM), which is set at 75. This suggests a significant gap in students' ability to apply the simple past tense appropriately in recount writing tasks. These findings highlight the need for a more focused strategy that emphasizes the correct usage of the simple past tense and sentence structure in recount text writing.

Selecting innovative teaching models that are suited to students' needs is essential for enhancing learning effectiveness and supporting the achievement of better learning outcomes. Teachers must carefully choose learning designs and models that align with the characteristics of their students (Hakiky, 2020). One approach proven to be effective in increasing student engagement is Game-Based Learning (GBL). GBL integrates game elements into the learning process to create a fun atmosphere, encourage active participation, and enhance deep understanding of concepts (Adiba et al., 2025). This method provides a relevant learning experience in line with the characteristics of 21st-century students who are familiar with technology and games. Furthermore, Dewi & Listiowarni (2019) add that GBL can serve as an effective alternative or complement to existing learning methods. Srimuliyani (2023) argues that the purpose of gamification is to create an enjoyable learning experience, motivate students to achieve learning goals, and encourage their active participation in the learning process. Therefore, implementing Game-Based Learning can foster a more engaging learning process that has the potential to improve student participation and ultimately enhance academic performance.

Based on the those considerations, the researcher is interested in using the Game-Based Learning approach to enhance Grade X students' writing skills in recount text, with an emphasis on the usage of the simple past tense. Results from Anggraeni (2023) demonstrate that using educational games to teach recount texts can enhance students' learning outcomes over time. From 25% in the preliminary observation to 37.5% in the first cycle, students' mastery continued to grow in the second cycle. Students also got more motivated and excited, and they also had an easier time understanding how the simple past tense is used while creating recount narratives.

Based on the above considerations, the researcher is interested in conducting a study aimed at improving the ability of Grade X students in writing recount texts, with a focus on the use of the simple past tense through the application of the Game-Based Learning method. Findings from Anggraeni (2023) show that the application of educational games in teaching recount texts can gradually improve students' learning outcomes. Students' mastery increased from 25% in the preliminary observation to

37.5% in the first cycle and continued to improve in the second cycle. Additionally, students became more enthusiastic, motivated, and found it easier to understand the use of the simple past tense in the context of writing recount texts.

The game used in this study was the Treasure Hunt, in which students were given five types of question cards to complete in groups. Each time a group successfully answered a card correctly, the teacher provided a marker indicating the task had been completed. The group that collected the most markers in the map given by the teacher would be declared the winner and receive the prize (the treasure). Through this game, it is expected that students can learn to write recount texts in a more enjoyable, active, and collaborative manner. By implementing the Game-Based Learning method, particularly through the Treasure Hunt game, students are not only required to understand the use of the simple past tense in recount texts but are also expected to develop greater motivation, active participation, and group collaboration in the learning process.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study was conducted in class X-4 of SMAN 20 Surabaya, involving a total of 35 students—16 male and 19 female. The research employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach, aiming not only to address learning challenges but also to enhance the teacher's professional practice in the classroom. As Klinton (2013) explains, Classroom Action Research is a systematic investigation designed by educators to improve their teaching practices directly within their own classroom environment.

Similarly, Kusuma (2010) as cited in Anggraeni (2023) emphasizes that CAR is a practical activity carried out by teachers to improve the quality of learning. This study followed the action research model proposed by Kemmis and Taggart (2002) as cited in Melalolin et al. (2020), which includes four interconnected stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. These stages form a continuous cycle, with each component informing and supporting the others throughout the research process. In this study, the cycle was implemented in two rounds.

### **Planning**

In this stage, the teacher identifies the problems occurring in the classroom and subsequently designs appropriate remedial actions, such as selecting a suitable teaching model or method. The teacher also develops Modul Ajar, which includes learning objectives, teaching and learning activities, student worksheets (LKPD), students' writing test and other relevant components. In addition, Modul Ajar incorporates assessment instruments, such as a writing rubric and an attitude assessment rubric to evaluate students' behavior throughout the learning process.

### **Acting**

In this stage, the teacher implements the learning process based on the Modul Ajar developed in the planning stage. Furthermore, the teacher conducts lessons focusing on the topic of recount texts.

### **Observing**

The teacher collects data related to students' performance and behavior using the instruments such as observation sheets and student's works. In addition, the teaching and learning process is documented during this stage to support further analysis.

### **Reflecting**

At this stage, the teacher analyzes the collected data to evaluate whether the implemented instructional strategies were effective in addressing the initially identified problems. Moreover, the teacher determines the follow-up actions, including whether the cycle should be concluded or repeated for further improvement. The criteria for the success is when at least 75% of students achieve a minimum score of 75 based on the writing rubric that consists of tense accuracy, sentence structure, relevance to the topic, vocabulary usage, and spelling and neatness.

To collect data, the researcher gathered information from both the teaching process and students' test results. The instruments used in this study included a teaching module (Modul Ajar) to guide the learning activities, observation sheets to assess student engagement, and student worksheets that served as tools for evaluating learning outcomes. In the student writing test, students are asked to write one paragraph that consists of at least 3 sentences that belong to the series of events in recount text structure. They did this test individually after doing Treasure Hunt games in groups.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Based on the data analysis, there was a significant improvement in students' scores from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2.

### **Cycle 1**

In the first cycle, the learning strategy employed was Cooperative Learning, aiming to improve students' understanding and application of the simple past tense in recount text writing. Based on the writing test score, 18 students from total 35 students (51%) achieved the minimum mastery criterion (KKM) of 75, while the remaining 17 students (49%) had not yet met the standard.

Table 1 Cycle 1's Result

| No | Aspect                            | Number | Percentage (%) |
|----|-----------------------------------|--------|----------------|
| 1  | Students achieve KKM (>75)        | 18     | 51%            |
| 2  | Students didn't achieve KKM (<75) | 17     | 49%            |
| 3  | Average student's score           | 77     |                |

### **Cycle 2**

Based on the results of cycle 1, students have not achieved the success criteria determined by the researcher. Thus, it is necessary to conduct a second cycle using a different learning method. In the second cycle, the teaching method was modified to Game-Based Learning, specifically using the “Treasure Hunt” game. This strategy aimed to increase students’ motivation, engagement, and practical use of the simple past tense through an interactive and contextualized learning environment.

The results from cycle 2 showed a remarkable improvement. 34 out of 35 students (97%) successfully reached the mastery level. This significant increase of nearly 46% from the previous cycle suggests that the integration of games into the learning process had a strong positive effect on student performance. The game allowed students to learn simple past tense in a fun, less pressured setting, thereby reinforcing the grammar rules of recount text more effectively.

Table 2 Cycle 2’s Result

| No | Aspect                            | Number | Percentage (%) |
|----|-----------------------------------|--------|----------------|
| 1  | Students achieve KKM (>75)        | 34     | 97%            |
| 2  | Students didn’t achieve KKM (<75) | 1      | 3%             |
| 3  | Average student’s score           | 91     |                |

These findings indicate that the implementation of the Game-Based Learning (GBL) method through the *Treasure Hunt* game successfully created an engaging and enjoyable learning environment. It motivated students and encouraged active participation in the process of learning to write recount texts, particularly in the use of the *simple past tense*. The use of educational games such as *Treasure Hunt* contributed positively to students’ learning outcomes. Besides cognitive improvement, students also exhibited higher levels of enthusiasm and motivation throughout the learning activities. This demonstrates that employing innovative instructional models such as GBL can be an effective strategy to enhance students' mastery of simple past tense in recount text writing.

## CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, AND SUGGESTION

Based on the findings of the research conducted, there was a significant improvement in the Grade X students’ ability to write recount texts using the simple past tense. Through the implementation of the *Game-Based Learning* (GBL) method using the “Treasure Hunt” game, a notable enhancement was observed in students’ learning outcomes.

In the first cycle, which applied a cooperative learning model, only 51% of students met the minimum mastery criteria. However, after the GBL method was implemented in the second cycle, this percentage rose sharply to 97%. Beyond the improvement in students' understanding of the simple past tense and sentence structure, they also became more confident in writing recount texts. This outcome is attributed to the engaging and interactive learning process, as reflected in the students' active participation during the "Treasure Hunt" game. This improvement indicates that the learning process became not only cognitively more effective but also more enjoyable, motivating, and conducive to active student participation. When students learn in an interactive and contextual environment, they are better able to understand and apply grammatical rules such as tense usage in writing recount texts.

The success of the GBL method in this study carries several important implications for English language instruction. In terms of instructional design, educators are encouraged to consider implementing interactive and student-centered approaches, such as educational games, to enhance grammar comprehension and writing skills in a more engaging manner. However, the feasibility of applying Game-Based Learning must also take into account the school's conditions and available resources. Therefore, it is advisable that schools support such initiatives by providing adequate resources, facilities, and teacher training.

Furthermore, future researchers are encouraged to develop a wider variety of educational games tailored to the characteristics and needs of students at different educational levels. Subsequent studies may also explore the effectiveness of Game-Based Learning in other language skills, such as speaking, listening, and reading in order to ensure a more comprehensive application of this method in enhancing students' English language proficiency.

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