


## Inflectional Morphemes in Eighth Grade Students' English Recount Writing at SMP Negeri 1 Pematangsiantar

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v11i3.2502>

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### A B S T R A C T

This study aimed to identify the types of inflectional morphemes used by eighth-grade students in writing recount texts and determine the most dominant type. A descriptive quantitative design was applied to 30 students from one eighth grade class. Data were collected through writing tests and documentation, then analyzed by identifying, classifying, and calculating the frequency of inflectional morphemes based on Yule (2020). The results show that there are seven types of inflectional morphemes used by the students: plural (-s/-es), possessive ('s), progressive (-ing), past tense (-ed), past participle (-en/-ed), comparative (-er), and superlative (-est). The percentage of each type is as follows: plural 116 occurrences (30.4%), possessive 11 occurrences (2.93%), progressive 58 occurrences (16%), past tense 160 occurrences (45.07%), past participle 26 occurrences (4.8%), comparative 1 occurrence (0.27%), and superlative 3 occurrences (0.53%). Among these types, the past tense is the most dominant inflectional morpheme used in students' recount writing. The findings indicate that students are generally able to express past events through their writing.

**Keywords:** *Inflectional Morphemes, Morphology, Recount Text, Writing*

#### Article History:

Received 03<sup>rd</sup> May 2026

Accepted 25<sup>th</sup> May 2026

Published 03<sup>rd</sup> June 2026



## INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the most important skills in learning English as a foreign language (EFL) because it enables students to communicate ideas, experiences, and information in written form (Harmer, 2010). In EFL contexts, writing is considered a challenging skill since students are required to apply various linguistic components simultaneously, such as grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and sentence organization (Hasanah, 2022; Sari & Wahyudin, 2019). To produce grammatically accurate writing, students need a good understanding of language structure, particularly morphology, which plays an essential role in word formation and grammatical accuracy (Yule, 2020). Morphological knowledge helps learners understand how words are formed and modified through morphemes, including inflectional morphemes that indicate grammatical information such as tense, plurality, possession, and comparison (Fromkin et al., 2018). Therefore, mastery of morphology contributes significantly to students' writing ability and the development of accurate written communication.

Language learning is closely related to linguistics, which is the scientific study of language structure and its use in communication (Yule, 2020). Linguistics is concerned with analyzing the systems and patterns of language, including sounds, words, and sentence structures (Yule, 2020). Furthermore, linguistics consists of several main branches, such as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (Fromkin et al., 2018). One important branch of linguistics is morphology, which focuses on word formation and structure, including the use of inflectional morphemes in writing. Writing as the ability to express ideas, thoughts, and experiences by constructing words, sentences, and paragraphs according to grammatical rules and using appropriate vocabulary (Harmer, 2010). Writing is

a means of communicating ideas through words, sentence structure, mechanics, and punctuation so that the message can be clearly understood by the reader (Sartika et al., 2022). Writing is also a process that includes developing ideas, drafting, editing, and publishing (Dhillon et al., 2024), and requires accuracy in grammar and word forms (Pasaribu, 2022). Similarly, writing is considered one of the most complex and challenging skills for learners of a second or foreign language (Nurkholijah & Hafizh, 2020). Writing is considered a complex skill because it involves not only expressing ideas but also applying correct grammar, appropriate vocabulary, and logical organization (Hasanah, 2022; Sari & Wahyudin, 2019). This is because writing requires learners to manage several linguistic elements simultaneously, such as grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and mechanics.

Furthermore, understanding morphology, particularly the correct use of inflectional morphemes, plays a crucial role in producing grammatically accurate written text. Morphology is a branch of linguistics that studies the internal structure of words and the processes by which they are formed. It is defined as the study of word formation and the relationships between words (Yule, 2020). This definition shows that morphology studies not only word formation but also the relationship between form and meaning. Morphology is a set of rules that enable speakers to form new words creatively and systematically (Lieber, 2021). This means that speakers can produce and understand new words they have never encountered before. Morphology examines the internal structure of words and the processes of word formation (Kosimova & Umarova, 2024). Similarly, morphology is the component of grammar that is concerned with the internal structure of words (O'Grady & Guzman, 2017). They emphasize that words are not the smallest units of language, but are composed of smaller meaningful elements. The linguistic term for these elements is morphemes, combine systematically to form words. A morpheme is a minimal unit of meaning or grammatical function Yule (2020), which are classified into free morphemes and bound morphemes. Free morphemes can stand alone as independent words, while bound morphemes must be attached to other morphemes to convey meaning. Bound morphemes are further divided into inflectional and derivational morphemes (Zaniar et al., 2024), in which inflectional morphemes function to express grammatical information such as tense, number, agreement, and possession without changing word class or meaning (Akmajian et al., 2017 as cited in Hund et al., 2021).

Inflectional morphemes are bound morphemes that function to indicate grammatical information without changing the basic meaning or word class of a word. Inflectional morphemes serve to mark grammatical features such as tense, number, agreement, comparison, and possession, while preserving the lexical identity of the word. This indicates that inflectional morphemes do not create new lexical items but instead signal grammatical relationships within sentences (Katamba & Stonham, 2020). Similarly, Inflectional morphemes are bound forms that add grammatical distinctions like tense, number, and person without changing the lexical category or core meaning of the base word, thereby encoding grammatical relationships within sentences (Hidayat & Rosalinah, 2026). Inflectional morphemes maintain consistency in expressing grammatical specifications and do not change a word's category. Because inflectional morphemes indicate relationships between words within a sentence rather than creating new lexical items, inflectional morphemes are crucial to grammatical structure (Putra et al., 2021).

In this context, inflectional morphemes play a crucial role in ensuring grammatical accuracy and clarity, particularly in recount texts that require correct tense usage (Fajriati & Ardini, 2024). Incorrect use of inflectional morphemes, especially those related to tense and number, may lead to unclear meaning in students' writing (Manihuruk, 2022). A recount text is a type of English text that retells past events or experiences in chronological order based on the writer's recollections Hyland (2018) with the purpose of informing or entertaining readers (Anatasya, 2024). It includes elements such as participants, time sequence, place, conjunctions, material processes, and the use of past tense forms (Wibowo & Rismawati, 2022), and generally consists of orientation, events, and re-orientation (Hyland, 2018). However, students often face difficulties in applying these forms. Based on preliminary observations during teaching

practice at SMP Negeri 1 Pematangsiantar, many eighth grade students showed problems in using inflectional morphemes accurately in recount writing, such as omitting past tense markers (“I visit my grandmother last weekend”), possessive markers (“my brother book”), and plural markers (“three apple”). These errors indicate inconsistent application of grammatical rules, resulting in unclear and inaccurate writing, and suggest that students still struggle to use inflectional morphemes appropriately despite having learned basic grammar. This study focuses on identify the types and the most dominant inflectional morphemes used in students’ recount texts.

## METHOD

Before the instruments were used in the research, they were reviewed by the English teacher and academic supervisor to ensure the suitability of the writing task with the research objectives and students’ level. The writing test was designed based on the eighth-grade curriculum and focused on recount text writing. In addition, document analysis was used to identify and classify the inflectional morphemes found in the students’ writing. In this research, the researcher employed a descriptive quantitative approach to analysed the types and the most dominant inflectional morphemes in the English recount writing of eighth grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Pematangsiantar. This approach was chosen because the research focused on analysing linguistic forms and presenting the data in the form of frequency and percentages without applying experimental treatment. The research process involved preparing and organizing data, exploring and analysing the text, representing the findings in tables, and interpreting the results. Quantitative descriptive research emphasizes numerical data and statistical analysis to describe phenomena. According to Creswell & Creswell (2023), quantitative research involves collecting numerical data, analysing it using statistical procedures, and interpreting the results to explain a phenomenon. In this research, students’ recount writing was analysed to identify the types and the most dominant inflectional morphemes used in their writing. Furthermore, a descriptive approach is suitable for describing existing conditions through systematic data collection and analysis (Gay et al., 2012). Therefore, this approach was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to systematically collect data through documents and analysed the use of inflectional morphemes in students’ recount writing. The research specifically focused on identifying the types and the most dominant inflectional morphemes found in the students’ writing.

## Resource of the Research and Object

The text source of this research was determined using a purposive sampling technique. One class consisting of 30 students from eighth grade of SMP Negeri 1 Pematangsiantar in the 2025/2026 academic year was selected as the sample. This class was chosen because it was considered to represent the characteristics of the population of eighth grade students. In addition, the number of students was considered sufficient to provide meaningful text for a descriptive quantitative analysis, particularly in identifying the types and the most dominant of inflectional morphemes in students’ writing. Furthermore, selecting one class allowed the researcher to manage and analyze the text more effectively. The object of this research is the types and the most dominant inflectional morphemes used in sentences written by eighth grade students in their English recount writing at SMP Negeri 1 Pematangsiantar.

## Instruments

In this research, the instruments used were a test and documents. The test was used to obtain students’ English recount writing, while document analysis was used to examine the use of inflectional morphemes in the students’ texts. These instruments enabled the researcher to collect and analyze the data systematically and accurately. The data analyzed in this research were taken from students’ recount writing produced through the test and served as the main source for identifying the types and the most dominant inflectional morphemes. A test is a method used to measure students’ knowledge or ability in a particular subject,

especially in language learning (Brown, 2004). In this research, the researcher used an essay test because it allowed students to produce written text freely in the form of recount writing. Students were asked to write a recount text based on their personal experiences, such as holidays, memorable events, or daily activities. They were given 60 minutes to write at least 100–150 words. The purpose of the test was not to assess writing ability, but to collect data for analyzing the types and the most dominant inflectional morphemes used in students' writing. Documents refer to written texts that provide relevant information for research. In this research, the documents consisted of students' English recount writing obtained from the test results. The primary data source was recount texts written by eighth grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Pematangsiantar in the 2025/2026 academic year. These texts provided authentic linguistic data for identifying and classifying the dominant frequency of inflectional morphemes used in students' writing. Through document analysis, the researcher was able to examine how inflectional morphemes naturally appeared in students' written texts.

### Data Collection Procedures

There are several text collection techniques in quantitative research. Quantitative text can be collected through tests, questionnaires, observations, and documents to (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In this research, the researcher used a test and documentation as text collection techniques. The test was used to elicit students' English recount writing, while documentation was used to collect and analyze the written texts as research text. The texts were collected from English recount writings produced by eighth grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Pematangsiantar. The researcher asked students to write recount text as part of the test. The students' writings were then collected and used as primary text sources. These written texts were considered reliable text because they reflected the students' actual language use in writing. The text collection procedures through tests and documentation were as follows: (a) The researcher requested permission from the principal and English teacher of SMP Negeri 1 Pematangsiantar to conduct the research. (b) The researcher administered a writing test by asking students to write recount text based on a given topic. (c) The researcher collected the students' recount texts as primary text. (d) The researcher read the texts carefully to understand the content and context of the students' writing. (e) The researcher selected sentences containing inflectional morphemes to focus on relevant text. (f) The extracted words were then organized and coded based on the type of inflectional morpheme (e.g., tense, plural, possessive, agreeable, comparative) to facilitate further analysis.

### Data Analysis Methods

In this research, the text analysis was conducted after collecting students' English recount writings. The text analysis procedures in this research followed the steps proposed by Creswell & Creswell, which include preparing and classifying the text, representing the text and describing the results to provide a clear understanding of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The data were analysed through several steps. First, the researcher prepared and classified the data based on the eight types of inflectional morphemes proposed by Yule (2020). After that, the data were represented in tables to make the findings clearer and more systematic. The researcher then calculated the frequency of each type of inflectional morpheme to determine the most dominant type by using the formula:

$$X = \frac{N}{\Sigma N} \times 100\%$$

Where:

X = The percentage of each type of inflectional morphemes

N = The number of a particular types of inflectional morphemes

ΣN = The Total number of all inflectional morphemes found in the texts

The results of the calculation were presented in the form of tables and percentages. This calculation helped the researcher describe the types and the most dominant inflectional morphemes used by students more clearly. The final step was describing the findings by providing examples taken from the students' writing to show the occurrence of each type of

inflectional morpheme. Furthermore, the validity of the research was ensured through content validity and the use of established linguistic theory, while reliability was maintained through consistent coding, repeated analysis, and supervisor evaluation to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the results.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

The data of this research were obtained from students' recount writing texts. The findings show that several types of inflectional morphemes were identified in the students' writing. The distribution and frequency of each type are presented in the following tables.

Table 1. The Distribution of Inflectional Morphemes in Students' Writing

No	Types of Inflectional Morphemes	Data Number	Frequency
1.	Plural form maker	[1], [6], [7], [13], [18], [20], [22], [25], [28], [30], [33], [35], [36], [37], [42], [43], [44], [47], [48], [51], [54], [55], [56], [57], [61], [64], [70], [72], [73], [75], [76], [77], [78], [81], [82], [86], [87], [101], [106], [107], [112], [115], [118], [119], [125], [126], [128], [137], [139], [140], [147], [151], [153], [158], [161], [166], [168], [169], [170], [172], [173], [174], [179], [181], [182], [183], [188], [195], [196], [213], [216], [220], [223], [226], [230], [233], [234], [235], [238], [241], [245], [246], [253], [261], [262], [265], [269], [273], [277], [279], [289], [292], [294], [298], [305], [307], [310], [315], [317], [322], [324], [329], [330], [335], [346], [347], [348], [353], [354], [356], [358], [366], [367], [368], [374], [375]	116
2.	Possessive form maker	[89], [122], [150], [157], [197], [202], [206], [208], [229], [333], [373]	11
3.	Progressive form Maker	[3], [8], [15], [24], [59], [85], [91], [95], [96], [97], [100], [117], [130], [138], [145], [146], [149], [152], [154], [155], [156], [175], [186], [190], [212], [215], [217], [225], [237], [248], [251], [252], [254], [255], [259], [275], [283], [285], [286], [290], [301], [304], [309], [318], [319], [326], [331], [336], [339], [340], [341], [342], [344], [351], [352], [355], [369], [372]	58
4.	Past tense form maker	[2], [4], [5], [9], [11], [12], [13], [17], [19], [21], [23], [26], [27], [29], [31], [32], [38], [39], [40], [41], [45], [49], [50], [52], [53], [58], [60], [63], [65], [66], [67], [69], [74], [79], [80], [83], [84], [88], [90], [93], [99], [102], [103], [104], [105], [109], [113], [114], [116], [120], [121], [123], [124], [127], [128], [131], [132], [133], [134], [135], [136], [141], [142], [143], [148], [160], [162], [163], [165], [167], [176], [177], [178], [180], [185], [187], [189], [192], [194], [198], [201], [203], [204], [205], [207], [209], [210], [211], [224], [231], [232], [236], [239], [240], [243], [244], [249], [250], [257], [258], [260], [263], [264], [267], [268], [270], [271], [272], [274], [276], [278], [280], [281], [282], [284], [287], [288], [291], [293], [295], [296], [297], [299], [300], [302], [303], [306], [308], [311], [312], [313], [314], [316], [320], [321], [323], [325], [327], [328], [332], [334], [337], [343], [345], [349], [350], [357], [359], [360], [361], [362], [363], [364], [365], [370], [371]	160
5.	Past participle form maker	[10], [16], [34], [46], [62], [68], [71], [92], [94], [98], [108], [110], [111], [144], [159], [171], [214], [218], [219], [221], [222], [227], [247], [256], [266], [338]	26
6.	Comparative form maker	[191]	1
7.	Superlative form maker	[193], [199], [200]	3
<b>Total</b>			<b>375</b>

Based on Table 1, the most dominant type of inflectional morpheme found in students' recount writing was the past tense form maker, with 160 occurrences. This finding indicates

that students were generally able to apply past tense forms in their writing, which is relevant to the characteristics of recount text that focuses on past events. The high frequency of past tense morphemes also suggests that students were more familiar with verb changes used to express past experiences. In contrast, possessive form maker appeared only 11 times, indicating that students rarely expressed ownership relationships in their recount texts. This may be because recount texts tend to focus more on actions and events rather than possession. Meanwhile, plural form maker appeared 116 times, showing that students were able to identify and use noun forms to refer to more than one object or person in their experiences. Based on the table above, the distribution of inflectional morphemes shows that all types are found in students' writing with different frequencies. The percentage of each type was calculated using the formula  $X = N / \sum N \times 100\%$ , where the total number of all inflectional morphemes identified in the data was 375. For example, the plural marker "-s" is calculated as:

$$X_{\{plural\}} = \frac{116}{375} \times 100\% = 30.93\%$$

Similarly, the past tense marker (-ed) is calculated as:

$$X_{\{past\ tense\}} = \frac{160}{375} \times 100\% = 42.66\%$$

The same calculation process was applied to all other types of inflectional morphemes to obtain their respective percentages. This procedure ensures that the percentages are derived systematically rather than presented directly without calculation. Based on the calculation of the data, the past tense marker (-ed) appears with the highest frequency, with a total of 160 occurrences (42.66%). It is followed by plural markers (-s) with 116 occurrences (30.93%), progressive markers (-ing) with 58 occurrences (15.47%), past participle markers (-en/-ed) with 26 occurrences (6.93%), and possessive markers (-'s) with 11 occurrences (2.93%). Meanwhile, comparative (-er) and superlative (-est) markers are the least frequently used, with 1 occurrence (0.27%) and 3 occurrences (0.80%), respectively. The researcher also presents the distribution in the form of a chart as follows:

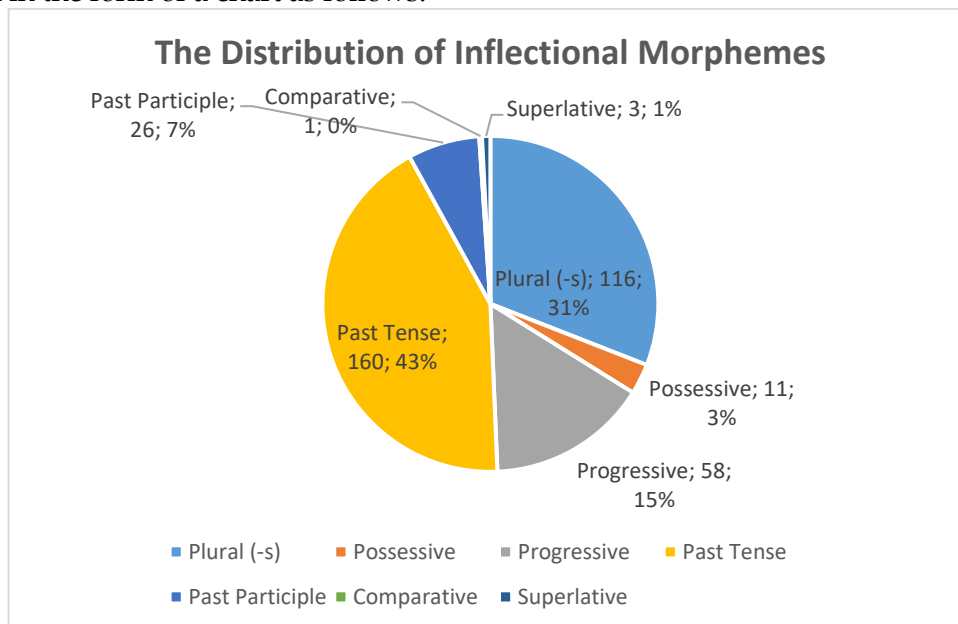


Figure 1. The Distribution of Inflectional Morphemes

Based from the result above, it can be concluded that the past tense inflectional morpheme (-ed) is the most dominant type used in students' recount writing. This finding is in line with the nature of recount text, which is used to retell past events. Therefore, students tend to use past tense forms more frequently in their writing. This finding is supported by previous studies, Anatasya (2024) states that recount text focuses on retelling past experiences, which requires the use of appropriate grammatical forms. In line with this, Wibowo & Rismawati (2022) explain that the use of inflectional morphemes in students' writing is

influenced by the type of text being written. Therefore, the use of past tense forms becomes more frequent in recount text writing.

## Discussion

In this research, the researcher analyzed the types found in the students' recount writing of eighth grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Pematangsiantar. Yule (2020) stated that there are eight types of inflectional morphemes in English. However, the findings of this study reveal that only seven types were found in the students' recount writing at eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Pematangsiantar. The seven types are plural, possessive, progressive, past tense, past participle, comparative, and superlative forms. Among these types, past tense markers are the most dominantly used, with a percentage of 42.66%. The dominance of past tense markers occurs because recount texts are used to describe past events and experiences. Therefore, the use of past tense becomes the main grammatical feature in this type of text. This is in line with the theory which states that inflectional morphemes such as past tense markers are used to indicate grammatical information, including time reference (Yule, 2020). This finding indicates that students are generally aware of the need to use past forms when writing recount texts, although their mastery is still limited. The absence of the third person singular marker (-s) in students' writing may be influenced by the type of text used in this study. Since the students were asked to write recount texts, which generally describe past events, the use of present tense forms is limited. As a result, the third person singular marker, which is typically used in the simple present tense, does not appear in the data. This indicates that students tend to focus on past tense forms rather than present tense forms when constructing recount texts.

This research is also in line with Anatasya (2024), who found that students used various types of morphemes in their writing but still experienced difficulties in applying inflectional morphemes correctly. Similarly, Wibowo & Rismawati (2022) reported that students used several types of inflectional affixes but faced challenges in identifying and applying them appropriately. However, the difference lies in the focus of the studies; the previous research examined both inflectional and derivational morphemes, while this study focuses specifically on inflectional morphemes in recount texts and their frequency of use. In addition, Apriyanto, (2019) found that students still experienced difficulties in understanding the function of each inflectional morpheme, particularly in grammatical application. While that study focused on error analysis, the present research emphasizes the frequency and distribution of inflectional morphemes. Furthermore, Agustina & Nazri, (2022) highlighted that students often made errors in using inflectional morphemes, especially in past tense forms. This supports the present findings, which show that the past tense is the most frequently used form in recount writing. However, their study focused on identifying errors and their causes, whereas this research focuses on the types and frequency of inflectional morphemes.

Similarly, Nuriawati & Saragih (2024) found that although students frequently used inflectional morphemes, they still made errors in application. This indicates that frequency of use does not necessarily reflect accuracy. However, their study involved senior high school students, while this research focuses on junior high school students, which may influence the level of morphological understanding. Moreover, Maulidina et al., (2019) stated that inflectional morphemes play an important role in providing grammatical information in written texts. This supports the findings of this study, as students use inflectional morphemes to construct meaningful sentences. However, their research analyzed newspaper articles, whereas this study focuses on students' writing in recount texts. Overall, the findings indicate that students have a basic understanding of inflectional morphemes, particularly in using past tense forms in recount writing. However, their use of other types of inflectional morphemes is still limited. This suggests that students require further practice and guidance to improve their understanding and application of various inflectional morphemes in writing.

## CONCLUSIONS

This research analyzes the English recount writing of eighth grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Pematangsiantar containing inflectional morphemes. Based on the text analyzed in this research, the inflectional morphemes identified can be classified into seven types, namely plural, possessive, progressive, past tense, past participle, comparative, and superlative. Among those types, past tense inflection was found to be the most dominant type used in students' recount writing. This indicates that students tend to use past tense forms more frequently because recount text focuses on past events and experiences. Therefore, it can be concluded that eighth grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Pematangsiantar used various types of inflectional morphemes in their recount writing, with past tense as the dominant type. The findings of this research provide pedagogical implications for English teaching, especially in teaching writing and grammar at junior high school level. Since past tense inflection becomes the most dominant type used by students in recount writing, English teachers are encouraged to give more attention to the teaching of inflectional morphemes through contextual writing activities. Teachers can integrate morphology instruction with recount text writing practices so that students not only understand grammatical forms theoretically but are also able to apply them appropriately in writing. In addition, teachers should provide exercises related to plural, possessive, progressive, comparative, and superlative forms because students still show limited use of these inflectional morphemes. By providing continuous practice, feedback, and corrective instruction, students are expected to improve their grammatical accuracy and writing quality in English recount texts.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researcher would like to sincerely thank everyone who helped to make this study a success. First and foremost, the researcher is incredibly grateful to God Almighty for His strength, blessings, and direction during the research process. Additionally, the researcher would like to sincerely thank the academic supervisor for their insightful advice, helpful recommendations, and unwavering support throughout the research process. We would especially like to thank SMP Negeri 1 Pematangsiantar's principal, English teacher, and students for their cooperation and assistance in supplying the study's data. Lastly, the researcher would like to express gratitude to friends and family for their unwavering support, inspiration, and encouragement. The success of this research would not have been possible without their help.

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