



Error Analysis of the Use of Adverbs 就 (Jiù) and 才 (Cái) by Grade XI Social Studies 5 Students at SMA Negeri 6 Malang

玛琅第六国立高中学校二年级社会科学 5 班学生“就”与“才”副词使用错误分析

Amalya Hasky Dwi Mahayu ^{1*}, Desti Nur Aini ¹, Lukluk UI Muyassaroh ¹

Universitas Negeri Malang, Jl. Semarang No. 5, Malang 65145, East Java, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: amalyahaskydwimahayu@gmail.com

Abstract: This study investigates errors in the use of the adverbs 就 (jiù, “earlier/sooner/then/just”) and 才 (cái, “later/slower/only”) among Grade XI Social Studies 5 students at SMA Negeri 6 Malang. The study aims to describe students’ errors in using these temporal adverbials and to identify the factors contributing to these errors. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, involving classroom observations, questionnaires, and performance tests to collect data from twenty-six participants. The analysis focused on distinguishing performance and competence errors, examining incorrect sentence constructions, and understanding the contextual usage of the adverbs. Findings reveal that most students were relatively proficient in using 就, while difficulties persisted in applying 才 correctly, particularly in sentences requiring nuanced temporal understanding. The primary causes of errors include initial difficulties in grasping the meaning and context of the adverbs, varied motivation and learning enthusiasm, limited comprehension of learning materials, and constraints in the classroom learning environment. Recommendations include increasing practice exercises, reinforcing theoretical understanding, employing interactive teaching methods, and encouraging students’ active participation in discussions. The results offer practical implications for improving Mandarin instruction, particularly in clarifying functional differences between 就 and 才, and provide a foundation for further research on error analysis in Mandarin learning.

Keywords: Mandarin adverbials, 就 (jiù), 才 (cái), error analysis, Indonesian learners

To cite this article: Mahayu, A. H. D., Aini, D. N., Muyassaroh, L. U. (2025). Error Analysis of the Use of Adverbs 就 (Jiù) and 才 (Cái) by Grade XI Social Studies 5 Students at SMA Negeri 6 Malang. *Journal of Chinese Language and Culture Studies*, 4(2), 10.17977/um073v4i22025p74-83.

Submit: 15 August 2025

Revised: 16 September 2025

Accepted: 1 December 2025

摘要: 本研究调查了马琅第六公立中学高二社会科学 5 班学生在使用副词 “就” 和 “才” 时的错误情况。研究旨在描述学生在使用这些时间副词方面的错误，并识别导致错误的因素。本研究采用描述性定性方法，通过课堂观察、问卷调查和表现测试收集了 26 名参与者的数据。分析重点在于区分表现性错误和能力性错误，检查句子结构中的不正确用法，并理解副词的语境使用情况。研究结果表明，大多数学生在使用 “就” 上相对熟练，而在正确使用 “才” 时仍存在困难，尤其是在需要细微时间理解的句子中。错误的主要原因包括对副词意义和语境的初步理解困难、学习动机和兴趣差异、学习材料理解有限，以及课堂学习环境的限制。研究建议包括增加练习、加强理论理解、采用互动教学方法，并鼓励学生积极参与讨论。



研究结果为改善汉语教学提供了实践参考，尤其是在阐明“就”和“才”功能差异方面，并为进一步的汉语错误分析研究奠定了基础。

关键词：汉语副词，就，才，错误分析，印尼学习者

1. INTRODUCTION

Humans require language as a medium for communication to interact with one another. Linguists have provided various definitions of language within the Indonesian context. Keraf (1984) states that language is a human speech tool capable of producing sound symbols for communication among members of society. Pateda (2011) adds that language is a systematic series of sounds that substitutes for a speaker when communicating and facilitates cooperation between the speaker and the interlocutor. Kridalaksana (2008) emphasizes that language is a sound-symbol system that enables interaction and mutual recognition among individuals, while Ramlan (2007) highlights the function of language as a communication tool between individuals within society. Although differences exist among speakers, language continues to connect groups of speakers into a unified whole, enabling them to adapt to cultural norms and societal customs. Understanding the general functions of language underscores the importance of foreign language proficiency, particularly Mandarin, in educational and professional contexts in Indonesia.

Mandarin Chinese plays a significant role in Indonesia due to the global economic influence of China. Public awareness of Mandarin learning has increased, as evidenced by the rising number of educational institutions offering Mandarin courses (Muyassaroh et al., 2021). Proficiency in Mandarin is advantageous for future careers, considering that many Indonesian companies maintain business relations with Chinese enterprises. According to Ying (2013) in Ventivani & Muyassaroh (2021), it is crucial for the younger generation in Indonesia to achieve a profound understanding of Mandarin. However, despite the importance of Mandarin proficiency, many learners still encounter difficulties, particularly in using temporal adverbials such as 就 (jiù, “earlier/sooner/then/just”) and 才 (cái, “later/slower/only”). These errors may hinder students’ ability to construct correct sentences, which becomes the primary focus of this study.

This study was conducted because a significant number of students in Grade XI Social Studies 5 at SMA Negeri 6 Malang still experience difficulties distinguishing between the adverbials 就 and 才. Preliminary data were collected through observations during the Teaching Assistance program (Asistensi Mengajar – AM) under the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program from September to December 2021. The observations indicated the importance of mastering these adverbials, reflecting the objectives and competencies in the high school Mandarin curriculum (Aini et al., 2022). The present study therefore seeks to describe errors in the use of 就, to describe errors in the use of 才, and to identify factors that cause errors in the use of these adverbials. For instance, in the sentence 晚上九点十分钟就回家 (*Wǎnshang jiǔ diǎn shí fēnzhōng jiù huíjiā*), the adverb 就 is used incorrectly, as the appropriate construction should be 晚上九点十分钟才回家 (*Wǎnshang jiǔ diǎn shí fēnzhōng cái huíjiā*), which conveys the intended meaning of “going home later at 9:10 p.m.”. This example illustrates the subtle but important distinction between the two adverbials.

Before analyzing the errors specifically, it is necessary to understand the general concept of a word as the basic linguistic unit. The *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI, 1997) defines a word as the smallest part of spoken or written language expressing feelings or ideas, as an expression or



term in a language, as a combination of syllables that can be freely pronounced, and as an independent unit consisting of one or more syllables. These definitions provide the foundation for understanding words as units employed in sentence construction, including adverbials in Mandarin. From a linguistic perspective, Crystal (1980) defines a word as a unit recognized by native speakers in both spoken and written forms. Ba'dulu and Herman (2010) argue that a word is a unit of meaning with a stable concept, while Chaer (2008) notes that words possess a fixed phonetic structure and can be repositioned within a sentence. Yongxin and Budianto (2005) further emphasize that the smallest unit used in sentence formation with an independent meaning is called a word. Such theoretical grounding is essential for the present analysis.

A word may be considered incorrect if it is selected or used improperly. In this study, the term "error" refers to systematic deviations from language rules (Corder, 1973). Dulay et al. (1982, in Tarigan 2011) note that errors occur when a speaker violates standard language norms. In Indonesian, this concept is synonymous with *kekeliruan* or *kegalatan*. Understanding linguistic errors is crucial before identifying errors in students' use of 就 and 才. The main purposes of analyzing such errors are to obtain information for understanding the nature of language learning and to guide teachers in addressing difficult language aspects and errors that hinder effective communication (Dulay et al., 1982 as cited in Tarigan, 2011).

Errors in language can be broadly classified into performance and competence errors. Performance errors, according to Chomsky (1965, in Tarigan 2011), occur due to fatigue or inattention and are typically referred to as mistakes. For example, in Mandarin, the incorrect sentence 我晚上九点才回家 (wǒ wǎnshàng wán diǎn cái huíjiā) should be corrected to 我晚上九点才回家 (wǒ wǎnshàng jiǔ diǎn cái huíjiā), where the error arises from mistakenly writing 丸 (wán) instead of 九 (jiǔ). By contrast, competence errors concern the learner's knowledge of the second language. As Corder (1967, in Tarigan 2011) explains, such errors reflect deficiencies in language competence. An example is the incorrect sentence 我们入点上课, 我七点半就来了 (wǒmen rù diǎn shàngkè, wǒ qī diǎn bàn jiù lái le), which should be 我们八点上课, 我七点半就来了 (wǒmen bā diǎn shàngkè, wǒ qī diǎn bàn jiù lái le). Here, the character 入 (rù) was confused with 八 (bā), revealing limitations in character recognition. Errors may occur at phonological, syntactic, lexical, or discourse levels, and understanding these types is essential in identifying patterns in students' mistakes.

Several previous studies have investigated the use of 就 and 才. Tobing (2012), employing a qualitative descriptive method, identified three types of errors in the use of these adverbials: misselection, overuse, and underuse. Data were obtained through literature review, questionnaires, interviews, and observations. Suryawaty (2017) adopted a quantitative approach and found that 就 and 才 serve multiple functions, display wide applicability, appear frequently, and convey complex meanings. Data were collected using questionnaires and written tests. Meanwhile, Siswanto (2018) combined quantitative and qualitative methods, concluding that 就 and 才 are both employed to indicate activities or events, with data obtained primarily through questionnaires. Despite these contributions, no prior study has specifically examined errors in the use of 就 and 才 among Grade XI Social Studies 5 students at SMA Negeri 6 Malang.

In light of these considerations, this study seeks to fill the research gap by analyzing the types and frequencies of errors in the use of 就 and 才 and by identifying the factors contributing to these errors. Mastery of these adverbials is crucial in Mandarin learning, particularly for the students of Grade XI Social Studies 5 at SMA Negeri 6 Malang. The results of this study are



expected to provide practical insights for improving the teaching of Mandarin, especially in designing strategies to minimize students' errors in the use of temporal adverbials. The following section presents the research methodology employed in this study.

2. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of students' use of the adverbs 就 and 才, including their behaviors, perceptions, motivations, and actions. The approach was based on postpositivist philosophy and applied in a natural context, relying on words and language as the main tools to describe phenomena (Moleong, 2021). The study emphasized the relevance of findings rather than generalization, with the use of triangulation and qualitative analysis as the principal tools for data collection (Sugiyono, 2019). Triangulation was achieved through classroom observation, questionnaires, and performance tests in order to enhance the credibility of the findings.

The research was conducted at SMA Negeri 6 Malang, located at Jl. Mayjen Sungkono 58, Buring, Kedungkandang, Malang, during July–August 2025. The participants consisted of twenty-six students from Grade XI Social Studies 5, who were selected through purposive sampling because they had previously studied the adverbs 就 and 才. The inclusion criteria required students to be actively engaged in Mandarin lessons and to be present during the period of data collection. Prior to the research, permission was obtained from the school, and informed consent was secured from both the students and their guardians. All data were kept confidential, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time.

The primary data of this research were transcriptions of students' errors in using the adverbs 就 and 才 during speaking tests. The instruments consisted of three components. Observation sheets were employed to systematically document classroom learning activities. Questionnaires were used to measure students' understanding and interest in learning, which were designed using a Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Performance tests were administered by asking students to read aloud and complete sentence gaps in order to evaluate their practical usage of 就 and 才. These instruments supported the process of data triangulation and minimized bias, thus providing comprehensive information regarding students' understanding and errors (Arikunto, 2006; Sugiyono, 2019).

The procedures of data collection were carried out in several stages. First, classroom observations were conducted to document the learning process in a systematic manner. Second, questionnaires were distributed to obtain data about students' understanding and their interest in learning Mandarin. Third, speaking tests in the form of performance tasks were conducted, and students' responses were transcribed for further analysis. The entire data collection process took place in natural classroom conditions without excessive intervention. Triangulation was then applied by comparing the results of observations, questionnaires, and speaking tests, while any inconsistencies were carefully noted for descriptive analysis.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis. The results of the speaking tests were examined and categorized into "correct" or "incorrect" responses. Questionnaire results were interpreted according to their Likert-scale categories, while observation data were described in relation to relevant classroom phenomena. Through this process, the analysis aimed to present a comprehensive picture of students' understanding, responses, and errors in using the adverbs 就 and 才 (Aini et al., 2021).

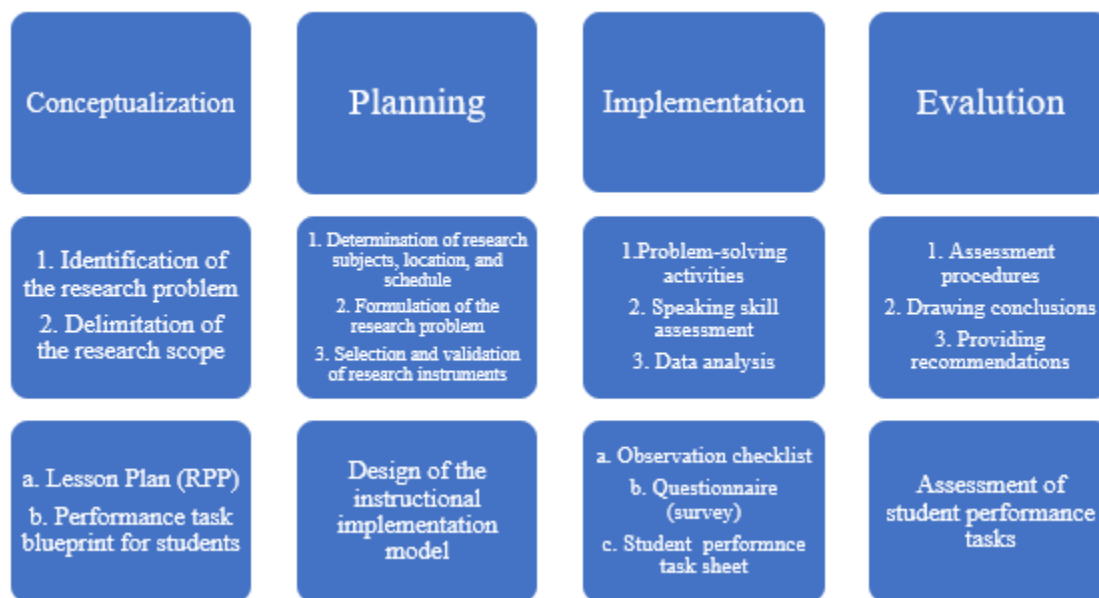


Fig 1. Stages of the Research Procedure

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings of the study regarding errors in the use of the adverbs 就 and 才 by Grade XI Social Studies 5 students at SMA Negeri 6 Malang. The discussion integrates both quantitative and qualitative data, focusing on the frequency of errors, contextual usage in sentences, and possible causes.

3.1 Errors in the Use of the Adverb 就 (jiù)

This sub-section describes students' errors in using the adverb 就 based on their performance in the task-based assessment.

3.1.1 Question 3

早上八点半上课，可是他九点（ ）到教室。

Zǎoshàng bā diǎn bàn shàngkè, kěshì tā jiǔ diǎn () dào jiàoshì.

“The class starts at 8:30 a.m., but he () arrived at the classroom at 9:00 a.m.”

Out of four students, three answered incorrectly using 就, and one answered correctly with 才.

Table 1. Errors in the use of 就 for Question 3

Respondent	Answer	Status
DIM	就	Incorrect
KEV	就	Incorrect



NAW	就	Incorrect
REP	才	Correct

Interpretation:

The correct adverb should be 才, as the action occurred later than expected. Most students mistakenly used 就, indicating difficulty in distinguishing temporal nuances between 就 and 才. This aligns with Wang (2006), stating that 才 indicates “later,” while 就 indicates “earlier.”

3.1.2 Question 6

你怎么现在 () 来, 我们等你很长时间了。

Nǐ zěnmē xiànzài () lái, wǒmen děng nǐ hěn cháng shíjiān le.

“Why did you () arrive now? We have been waiting for you a long time.”

Out of four students, one answered incorrectly with 就, and three answered correctly with 才.

Table 2. Errors in the use of 就 for Question 6

Respondent	Answer	Status
IND	就	Incorrect
NAV	才	Correct
OXG	才	Correct
SAF	才	Correct

Interpretation:

The use of 才 accurately conveys the delayed action. This finding is consistent with Lu (1999), which explains that 就 emphasizes early or immediate occurrence, whereas 才 marks delayed events.

3.2 Errors in the Use of the Adverb 才 (cái)

This sub-section discusses students’ errors in using 才 based on their performance in the task-based assessment.

3.2.1 Question 1

他早上骑自行车上学, 十分钟 () 到学校了。

Tā zǎoshàng qí zìxíngchē shàngxué, shí fēn zhōng () dào xuéxiào le.

“He goes to school by bicycle in the morning; it takes ten minutes () to arrive.”

Out of five students, two answered incorrectly using 才, while three answered correctly with 就.

Table 3. Errors in the use of 才 for Question 1

Respondent	Answer	Status
NAD	才	Incorrect
THO	才	Incorrect
ARD	就	Correct
INP	就	Correct
RAY	就	Correct



Interpretation:

The correct adverb is 就, as the action occurs quickly. Most students understand 就, but some confuse it with 才.

3.2.2 Question 2

他每天早上很早 () 去上班了。

Tā měitiān zǎoshàng hěn zǎo () qù shàngbān le.

“He goes to work very early every morning.”

Out of five students, three used 才 incorrectly, while two used 就 correctly.

Table 4. Errors in the use of 才 for Question 2

Respondent	Answer	Status
ARY	才	Incorrect
IRM	才	Incorrect
REG	才	Incorrect
NAU	就	Correct
TRI	就	Correct

Interpretation:

Students’ errors indicate difficulty in understanding temporal semantics. 就 is appropriate for early occurrence.

3.2.3 Question 4

我去了四家书店, () 买到这本书。

Wǒ qù le sì jiā shūdiàn, () mǎi dào zhè běn shū.

“I went to four bookstores and () bought this book.”

Out of four students, one answered incorrectly with 才, and three answered correctly with 就.

Table 5. Errors in the use of 才 for Question 4

Respondent	Answer	Status
MAZ	才	Incorrect
FEB	就	Correct
NAY	就	Correct
REV	就	Correct

Interpretation:

Most students correctly used 就, which highlights quick or early actions (Ding, 2022).

3.2.4 Question 5

我家离他家不远, 走路十五分钟 () 能到。

Wǒ jiā lí tā jiā bù yuǎn, zǒu lù shí wǔ fēn zhōng () néng dào.

“The distance between my house and his house is not far; walking fifteen minutes () arrives.”

Out of four students, one answered incorrectly with 才, while three answered correctly with 就.



Table 6. Errors in the use of 才 for Question 5

Respondent	Answer	Status
FIO	才	Incorrect
MUH	就	Correct
NES	就	Correct
RIO	就	Correct

Interpretation:

Most students successfully applied 就 for early/quick actions, consistent with Lu (1999).

3.3 Causes of Errors in Using 就 and 才

Based on questionnaires and observations, several factors contributed to the students' errors in using the adverbs 就 and 才. First, many students experienced difficulty in understanding the meaning and contextual application of these adverbs. For example, in Question 1 only eight students agreed that Mandarin was easy to learn at the beginning, while twelve students somewhat disagreed and six students disagreed, showing that comprehension was uneven from the outset.

Second, motivation and learning enthusiasm played a role. Most students expressed interest in learning Mandarin, as reflected in their responses to Questions 2, 5, and 6, yet their interaction outside the classroom remained low, particularly in Question 7. This indicates that although they enjoyed the subject, their engagement was largely confined to formal learning sessions.

Third, comprehension of the material varied among students. Some considered the lessons easy to understand, as shown in their responses to Questions 4 and 10, whereas others reported that they needed more time to grasp the concepts. This uneven understanding suggests that teaching pace and reinforcement strategies need to be adjusted.

Finally, the learning environment also influenced student performance. Although the classroom atmosphere was generally supportive, students were less willing to ask questions or seek clarification outside of class. This limited their opportunity to deepen their understanding of the distinction between 就 and 才.

In light of these findings, it can be concluded that the main causes of errors were the initial difficulty in understanding semantic differences, insufficient practice, and varied levels of motivation. Improvements could be achieved through increased practice exercises, reinforcement of theoretical explanations, and more engaging teaching methods that stimulate active participation both inside and outside the classroom.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that Grade XI Social Studies 5 students at SMA Negeri 6 Malang were relatively proficient in using the adverb 就, although some errors were still observed in its application. In contrast, greater difficulties were found in the use of 才, particularly in sentences that required a nuanced understanding of temporal contexts. These findings indicate that the functional differences and contextual applications of the two adverbs have not yet been fully grasped by the students.

Furthermore, the questionnaire results revealed that most students demonstrated considerable interest and enthusiasm toward learning Mandarin. They generally perceived the materials as engaging and the classroom environment as supportive of the learning process.



However, a lack of initiative to seek clarification outside class hours was identified, suggesting a limitation in students' independent learning habits.

This study, however, is not without limitations. The sample was restricted to a single class (Grade XI Social Studies 5) with a relatively small number of participants. In addition, the research instruments—performance tests and questionnaires—were rather simple, which limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other contexts or populations.

In light of these findings, several recommendations are proposed. For students, it is important to deepen their understanding of the distinctions between 就 and 才 through continuous practice in order to reduce recurring errors. For teachers, the results of this study can serve as a valuable reference for refining teaching strategies and developing more effective learning materials, particularly in clarifying the functional differences of these two adverbs. For future researchers, this study may be used as a reference point to expand the scope of inquiry, whether through longitudinal approaches or cross-context studies, thereby enriching the understanding of errors in Mandarin usage.

Overall, this study contributes both practically and academically to the understanding of students' difficulties in using 就 and 才, while also providing a foundation for improvements in classroom practice and further scholarly investigation.

REFERENCES

- Aini, D. N., Afifah, Y. N., & Sakti, K. F. L. (2022). Authentic Assessment pada Keterampilan Menulis Siswa Bahasa Mandarin. *Edukasi: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 20(2), 300–314. <https://doi.org/10.31571/edukasi.v20i2.4590>
- Aini, D. N., Laksono, K., & Ridwan, A. (2021). Indonesian-german bicultural literacy comprehension: The students' inference perspective. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(1), 187–204. <https://doi.org/10.52462/jlls.11>
- Arikunto, S. (2006). *Prosedur Penelitian: Suatu Pendekatan Praktik* (Revisi). Rineka Cipta.
- Ba'dulu, H. A. M., & Herman. (2010). *Morfosintaksis*. Rineka Cipta.
- Cher, A. (2008). *Linguistik umum*. Rineka Cipta.
- Corder, S. P. (1973). *Introducing Applied Linguistics*. Penguin.
- Crystal, D. (1980). *A first dictionary of linguistics and phonetics* (1st ed.).
- Ding, W. (2022). 副词“就”和“才”用来表示时间的比较. <https://www.wenmi.com/article/pzqbc3046ouz.html>
- Keraf, G. (1984). *Tata Bahasa Indonesia*. Nusa Indah.
- Kridalaksana, H. (2008). *Kamus Linguistik (Edisi Keempat)* (Keempat). Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Lu, S. (1999). *Eight hundred words of modern Chinese [现代汉语八百词]*. Beijing Language and Culture University Press.
- Moleong, L. J. (2021). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Revisi). PT. Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Muyassaroh, L. U., Mardasari, O. R., Ventivani, A., Sakti, K. F. L., Atho'ullah, N. A. Z. R., &



- Mahardhika, T. (2021). Penguatan Pemahaman Materi Lintas Budaya Bagi Guru Mgmp Bahasa Mandarin. *SELAPARANG Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Berkemajuan*, 5(1), 1036. <https://doi.org/10.31764/jpmb.v5i1.5161>
- Pateda, M. (2011). *Linguistik Sebuah Pengantar*. Angkasa.
- Ramlan, A. G. (2007). *Pembinaan Bahasa Indonesia yang Benar*. FITK Press.
- Siswanto, L. A. (2018). Analisis Kesalahan Penggunaan Kata 就 dan 才 pada Mahasiswa Universitas Widya Kartika Surabaya. *Seminar Nasional Ilmu Terapan (SNITER) 2018, E04-1*.
- Sugiyono. (2019). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D* (Sutopo (ed.); Kedua). Alfabeta.
- Suryawaty, Y. (2017). 丹戎布拉国立大学中文系 2014 届学生使用汉语副词"就"与"才"的偏误分析 ANALISIS KESALAHAN PENGGUNAAN KATA KETERANGAN "JIU" DAN "CAI" PADA MAHASISWA PRODI BAHASA MANDARIN. Universitas Tanjungpura.
- Tarigan, H. G. (2011). *Pengajaran Analisis Kesalahan Berbahasa (Revisi)*. Angkasa.
- Tobing, L. I. (2012). Analisis Kesalahan Leksikon Penggunaan Kata Keterangan Waktu Jiu dan Cai oleh Mahasiswa Sastra Cina Fakultas Ilmu Budaya USU 苏北大学两年级的学生习得汉语副词“就”和“才”偏误分析 (yin ni xue sheng xi de han yu fu ci “jiu ” he “cai ” pian wu fen xi). Universitas Sumatera Utara.
- Ventivani, A., & Muyassaroh, L. U. (2021). Pengembangan Media Pembelajaran 媒语 [Mèi y ũ] Berbasis Multimedia Dengan Desain Pembelajaran Cooperative Learning. *Proceeding In Seminar Nasional Pembelajaran Bahasa dan Sastra (SELASAR)*.
- Wang, Q. (2006). 现代汉语副词‘才’和‘就’时间表达的比较研究 [A comparative study of temporal expressions of the adverbs “cái” and “jiù” in modern Chinese]. China Academic Journals Electronic Publishing House (CNKI). https://oversea.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CJFD&dbname=CJFDLASN2019&filename=YWLY200601033&uniplatform=OVERSEA&v=3P_qtPv7NcDpq50Cht4CU-Tll-l5t-Rd4JF3vgqztTsunBJvbYq5TXvrjFD7mh1h
- Yongxin, & Budianto. (2005). *Intisari Tata Bahasa Mandarin*. Rekayasa Sains.