

## **AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN CONSTRUCTING ENGLISH SENTENCES A CASE STUDY AT SECOND GRADE STUDENTS OF SMAN 2 WERA IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2014/2015**

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### **ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menginvestigasi kesulitan-kesulitan murid-murid dalam mengkonstruksi kalimat-kalimat bahasa Inggris khususnya kalimat deklaratif (afirmatif dan negatif) untuk mengungkapkan aktifitas sehari-hari dengan memfokuskan pada kesesuaian subjek dan predikat. Populasi dalam penelitian ini adalah murid-murid kelas dua SMAN 2 Wera sejumlah 140 murid. Akan tetapi, peneliti hanya mengambil 1 kelas (kelas XI IPA 1) sebagai perwakilan dari seluruh populasi yaitu sejumlah 36 murid. Data dikumpulkan dengan menggabungkan jawaban-jawaban beberapa tes seperti pilihan ganda, menulis, kuisioner, dan kalimat rumpang. Peneliti menemukan bahwa murid-murid tidak mengerti bagaimana cara mengkonstruksi kalimat deklaratif negatif dibandingkan dengan kalimat deklaratif positif. Data menunjukkan bahwa ada 83,33 % murid-murid yang mempunyai nilai yang berada dikategori paling bawah. Hal ini berarti bahwa kemampuan murid-murid adalah sangat rendah. Ada tiga faktor yang berkontribusi kesulitan-kesulitan murid didalam mengkonstruksi kalimat bahasa Inggris antara lain Interference, Intralingual, and developmental errors.

**Kata Kunci:** *Siswa, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Based on National Education Standard Agency (BSNP) for National Examination in Academic Year 2014/2015, The National Standard of Competency reveals the students' ability to grasp the meaning of short functional text and simple essay in descriptive, procedure, report, narrative and recount in daily context. However, most of students in Junior high school are still having a little understanding how to construct English sentences. In learning English as the first foreign language, it is believed that most Indonesian students find many difficulties in constructing words into a correct sentence. There are several

reasons that make Indonesian students have difficulties in constructing sentences. First, their native language interferes with their target language. Second, students do not have sufficient vocabularies. Third, they have less understanding about parts of sentences. It is linear with researcher's experiences when the researcher got teaching apprenticeship at SMAN 2 Wera. Most of students had difficulties in building or translating a simple sentence. Students often made mistakes in constructing simple sentences. They regarded that learning English sentences is similar to learning Indonesian's sentences, especially in subject and verb agreement. For example "*She wear*

uniform". The verb "wear" in this sentence is not concord with the subject "she". This indicates that students' target language have been interfered by their native language. Therefore, learning subject-verb agreement is helpful for these students in making grammatically correct sentences

The case above is one of the problems made and faced by students of SMAN 2 Wera. The researcher assumes that students' difficulties are caused by many factors such fewer grammatical abilities, or fewer opportunities in writing practice that hinder their learning in building sentences.

Based on researcher's experience and teacher's interview, the researcher will investigate about the students' difficulties in constructing English sentences, especially investigate more in constructing subject-verb agreement in affirmative declarative and negative declarative sentences in daily activities and explain more about the main factors contributing to these difficulties.

According to Ghaith (2002:1) "writing is a complex process that allows writers to explore thoughts and ideas and make them visible and concrete." It is one of the priority language skills recommended to improve the students' ability in learning process besides speaking, listening and reading. Sometimes, when one is writing, one tends to imagine or illustrate something by using her or his own language; therefore, one produces words without considering the convention of writing such as grammar, diction, punctuation, spelling, and so forth.

Because writing is a complex process, Harsyaf (2009:3) mentions that "writing is transforming thought into a language; it means that we need to think about the

content of our writing first and then arrange the ideas using appropriate language (e.g vocabulary)." Consequently we must learn about organizational skills in writing.

There are several types of English sentences such as declarative, imperative, interrogative and exclamatory sentences. Hanafi (2010: 10) defines them as follows:

1. Declarative sentence is a sentence which is in the form of a statement.
2. Imperative sentence is in the form of a command, but it is not always an order.
3. Interrogative sentence is in the form of a question.
4. Exclamative sentence is sentence that begins with a phrase using what or how, but do not reserve the order of subject and auxiliary verb.

Most of English Foreign Students, especially Indonesian students have difficulties in learning their new target language. In this case, the nature of language learner significantly influences to acquire the Target language. At the first time learn, students tend to make errors and mistakes in spoken and written language. There are several sources of errors made by English learners such as Interferences, Intralingua and developmental error.

According to Dictionary of Language Teaching and applied Linguistic (1992) in Erdogan (2005:3)

A learner makes mistake when writing or speaking because of lack attention, fatigue, carelessness, or some other aspect of performance. Mistakes can be self-corrected when attention is called. Whereas, an error is the use of linguistic item in a way that a fluent native speaker of the language regards it is as showing faulty or incomplete learning.

Richard (1971b) in Ellis (1974) said there are several sources of errors such as interference errors, Intralingual errors and Developmental errors.

## Interference errors

According to Richard (1971b) in Ellis (1974) says that "Interference errors occur as a result of 'the use of elements from one language while speaking another.' An example might be when a German learner of L2 English says \*' I go not' because the equivalent sentence in German is 'Ich gehe nicht'.

## Intralingual Errors

Richard (1971b) in Ellis (1974) states that Intralingual errors reflect the general characteristics of rule learning such as faulty generalization, incomplete application of rules and failure to learn conditions under which rules applied. It means that less knowledge about target language can contribute several errors whether in spoken or written. This can be hinder factor for students in learning English sentences.

## Developmental Errors

Developmental errors occur when the learner attempts to build up hypotheses about the target language on the basis of limited experience.

Richards (1971b) also classifies intralingual errors into four categories:

### (1) Overgeneralization

It occurs when the learner creates a deviant structure on the basis of other structures in the target language. It generally involves the creation of one deviant structure in place of two target language structures (for example, 'He can sings' where English allows 'He can sing' and ' He sings').

### Ignorance of the rule restrictions

It involves the application of rules to contexts where they do not apply. An example is 'He made me to rest' through extension of the pattern found with the majority of verbs that take infinitival complements (for example, 'He asked /wanted/invited me to go').

## (2) Incomplete application of rules

It is typically related to analogy. It involves a failure to fully develop a structure. Thus learners of L2 English have been observed to use declarative word order in questions (for example, 'You like to sing?') in place of interrogative word order (for example, 'Do you like to sing?'). This type of intralingual error corresponds to what is often referred to as an error of transitional competence.

## (3) False concepts hypothesized

It occurs when the learner does not fully comprehend a distinction in target language. For example, the use 'was 'as a marker of past tense in \*'One day it was happened'.

Some work has been done in the field study of this research. For example, Sudasni(2011) on *an Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Using Interrogative Sentence*. She identified some common mistakes often made by the students in producing interrogative sentence, especially in using wh-questions.

The data was divided into four parts. The first part deals with the result of students' individual score, the second parts deal with the identification of the dominant mistakes that students made in completing blank sentences by using wh-questions, the third part deals with the analysis of the translation text from English to Indonesian and the fourth part deals with describing the students' difficulties based on the answers from questionnaires.

Another research was conducted by Rahayu (2011). The research was about "Error analysis on English Sentences". She chose 30 sixth grade students of SDN 38 Ampenan as the sample. They were asked to translate two paragraphs. The result of this research was that there were 55,79% who made errors on subject-verb agreement,

7,71% who made error on singular and plural form, and 45% students who made errors on the using of article. Those errors were caused by intralingual transfer.

The present study is about students' difficulties in constructing affirmative declarative and negative declarative English sentences. This study has similarities and differences with the previous ones. The similarities are on the analysis of students' difficulties in constructing English sentences and the identification of students' mistakes. While the differences are on the types of sentences analyzed. This study focuses on affirmative declarative and negative declarative sentences. While, Sudesni(2011) focused on interrogative sentences.

Finally, this study will investigate more about the ability and difficulties in constructing English sentences especially in declarative sentences in daily activities and describe the factors which contributing students' difficulties in learning English sentences as well.

## RESEARCH METHOD

Population of this research was the second grade students of Senior high school at SMAN 2 Wera in the academic year of 2014/2015. There were 140 students consisting of 3 classes (XI IPA1, XI IPA2, and XI IPA3). The researcher took one class

(XI IPA1) as a representation of the whole population of second grade students of XI IPA1 in the academic year 2014/2015 by using purposive sampling.

To obtain the data that was needed for this research, the researcher use some tests (multiple-choice and Fill in the blank, writing test (making and translate sentences) and questionnaire. These data were very useful to support data analysis and to answer research questions.

After collecting the data, the researcher used descriptive method to analyze it. The first, the researcher analyzed the students' difficulties in several tests (multiple choices, filling in the blank, translation and producing sentences). The second, the researcher identified the students' difficulties from questionnaire. The third, the researcher identified and described the students' ability levels. The fourth were descriptions of Students' difficulties in affirmative and negative sentences. The fifth were the results of questionnaire. The last, the researcher explained the factors which contributing students' difficulties.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Based on the research, the researcher found that students had difficulties in constructing negative declarative sentences in comparison to affirmative sentences.

Instruments	Negative sentences	Affirmative sentences
Multiple choice (MP)	38,33 %	33,33%
Filling in the blank (FB)	16,66%	13,80%
Translation sentences	33,33%	2,77%
Producing sentences	66,66%	2,77%

The data above shows that the gap of students who failed in producing negative sentences and affirmative sentences is very far away with percentage 66,66%: 2,77%.

Besides tests, the researcher used questionnaire to identify, describe and explain students' difficulties in building declarative sentences. The question number 5,6,7,8 and 9 explained that those students were unable to construct English sentences even though they said that they understood about the patterns. In the patterns of subject-verb agreement, the students did not understand and failed to construct the sentences.

The question number 12 and 13 explained that most of students often made the mistakes in constructing affirmative and negative sentences. They had difficulties in negative sentences, mainly to determine auxiliary verb and made it concord with the subject and adding negation word "not" in simple present tense. Based on the result of questionnaire showed that there were fewer students who failed to construct affirmative sentences in translation test than those of students in negative sentences with the percentage of 2,7 %: 33,33%.

Identification of students' scores to get the levels of the students' ability by calculating the score as follows:

$$M_s = \frac{\sum sc}{N}$$

$$M_s = \frac{123,76}{36} = 3,34$$

The table 3 shows the researcher found that one student got *very good* category and one student got *satisfied* category, 4 students got *poor* category and 30 students got *very poor* category.

The researcher described the students' difficulties in constructing affirmative and negative sentences by providing several examples below:

#### **Interference errors**

\*She always wash clothes every Monday.

. (It can be revised to *She always washes* clothes every Monday)

\* My sister no study English every day.

(It can be revised to *my sister does not* study English every day)

Table 3. This is the table of percentage scale and qualification to determine students' ability:

No	Range	Number of the students	Category	Percentage
1	80-100	1	Very good	2,7%
2	70-79	0	Good	0%
3	56-69	1	Satisfied	2,7%
4	46-55	4	Poor	11,11%
5	0-45	30	Very Poor	83,33%

### **Intralingual errors / overgeneralization**

\* We *cleans* living room every day.

(It can be revised to *we clean* living room every day)

\* He *do not goes* to school at 07.00.

(It can be revised to *he does not go* to school at 07.00)

### **Developmental errors**

\* Fahmi and Andi *playing* football every Monday. (It can be revised to *Fahmi and Andi play* football every Monday).

\* Indra *do not cleaning* house every morning. (It can be revised to *Indra does not clean* house every morning).

### **Conclusion and Suggestion**

Based on the analyses, it was concluded that the ability of students in XI IPA 1 was very poor. This was proved by the mean score of students which was about 3, 34 and only two students who got scores >65. More than 50 % of students got the last category. The researcher found that the students did not understand how to construct negative declarative sentence in comparison to constructing affirmative declarative sentences. There were three factors which contributed on students' difficulties in constructing English sentences such as Interference, Intralingual, and developmental errors. For the next researchers, the researcher suggests to investigate more about students' difficulties not only for this case, but also the other phenomena in constructing English sentences.

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