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Characteristics on Simple Sentences of Simple Present Tense Made by the Seventh Grade Students of SMPN 7 Samarinda

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Abstract
This research was intended to know the characteristics of simple sentences of simple present tense made by the seventh grade students of SMP Negeri 7 Samarinda. This study used descriptive design. The population of the research was the seventh grade students of SMP Negeri 7 Samarinda with the total number of the population was 288 students, and the sample members taken was 58 students. The instrument of this study was a written test in the form of transformational sentences. The main tools to analyze the data were illustrations, facts, or features and statements. The research revealed the following findings: The characteristics of simple sentences in simple present tense made by the seventh grade students of SMP Negeri 7 Samarinda were: (a) omitting suffixes –s/es on main verbs for singular subject in affirmative forms, (b) mis forming the main verbs in present tense, (c) mis forming tense in simple present tense, (d) misusing auxiliary do/does in negative and interrogative form, (e)) omitting auxiliary do/does in negative and interrogative forms and (f) misadding the auxiliary be and will.

Keywords: *Simple Sentences, Simple Present Tense*

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INTRODUCTION

Mastery of English sentence structures is required by the students, because by means of correct sentence patterns, they speak meaningful and intelligible English (Amaliah et al., 2023). Unfortunately, the students are often troubled in English communication due to their lack of sentence structure. Furthermore, based on the early observation in the teaching and process of English at the seventh grade, students of SMP Negeri 7 Samarinda indicate that students often make errors in constructing sentence patterns (Rosen, 2020). Moreover, it seems that one of the problems faced by the students in learning the sentence

structures of English is how to construct simple sentence of simple present tense in correct and acceptable ways. Reviewing the explanation on the background above, the researcher considered that there was no research which was considered for exploring the characteristics of simple sentences made by the seventh grade students of SMP Negeri 7 Samarinda. That is why the researcher, by this research, tried to give a useful contribution concerning the characteristics on simple sentences in simple present tense.

Moreover, some researches have explored learners' abilities and common errors in using the simple present tense. For instance, Subroto (2017) conducted an error analysis of students' writing using the surface strategy taxonomy and found that omission and misformation were the most frequent types of errors. Similarly, Zalukhu (2023) analyzed seventh graders' descriptive texts and noted a high rate of verb-related errors, especially when forming third person singular verbs. These findings indicate that although learners may understand the rules of the simple present tense in theory, they frequently fail to apply them correctly in practice.

Other researches, such as those by Yulisa and Amelia (2014) and Afriani and Fatmawati (2014), examined students' abilities to write affirmative, negative, and interrogative sentences in the simple present tense. Both studies concluded that students' performance was mostly in the "moderate" range, indicating partial understanding with room for improvement. Meanwhile, Putra and Sari (2018) reported that even senior high school students showed a low mastery of basic grammatical structures, particularly when distinguishing between "to be" and main verbs.

Recent high-reputation journal publications, such as Ellis (2016) in Language Teaching Research, emphasize the importance of form-focused instruction and output-based grammar learning, showing that direct practice in structured sentence formation can significantly improve learners' grammar acquisition. Similarly, work by Nassaji and Fotos (2017) in The Modern Language Journal highlights the role of error awareness and feedback in developing grammatical accuracy. These studies suggest that attention to sentence-level accuracy in meaningful contexts plays a key role in long-term mastery.

The importance of this research question lies in the fact that simple present tense usage is a basic yet persistently problematic area for EFL learners, and understanding the actual sentence structures they produce can reveal both errors and learning strategies. Unlike many prior studies focusing solely on error identification, this research investigates the syntactic patterns and sentence types students tend to use—simple, compound, or incomplete—offering a more nuanced picture of their grammatical development.

METHOD

The design of the research was descriptive qualitative research. It was a descriptive design because it wanted to describe the current phenomena obtained from the field at the time the investigation is conducted. This idea was relevant to the statement of Nazir (2005:64) who stated that: A descriptive study is a method to investigate a group of society and object, a set of conditions, a system of thought, or a present class or event. This study is aiming to describe and to draw or figure systematically, factually and accurately about the facts, the characteristics and the relationship of each phenomenon investigated.

The population of this research was the whole seventh grade students of SMP Negeri 7 Samarinda. There were eight classes of the seventh grade students with the total number of the students was 288.

Concerning the sample size of the sample, If the total number of populations is lower than one hundred subjects, the population is taken all, but if the population is large, the sample can be taken from 10% to 15%, or from 20% to 25%, and if the population is homogeneous, it is not necessary to take more sample. Therefore, the researcher determined the size of the sample selected is 20% from the whole population. The calculation of the sample was 288 x 20% = 58. The 58 sample students were selected from 8 classes under the proportional and simple random sampling techniques. For every class, it was randomly selected from 7 to 8 students as the representative sample.

The instrument used to collect the data was the researcher-made test on simple sentence of simple present tense. Materials of the test were taken from the English text book for the seventh grade of SMP students. The book entitles Real Time which is written by Bates (2013) and published by Erlangga. The researcher also adopted some relevant materials on simple sentences test from other references. The researcher used the kinds of the test because the analysis of the research was to see the characteristics of simple sentences of simple present tense made by the seventh grade students of SMP Negeri 7 Samarinda in constructing simple sentences. The total number of the test items was 30 items which dealt with: (a) 10 items dealing with affirmative sentences of simple sentences in simple present tense (b) 10 items dealing with negative sentences of simple sentence in simple present tense, and (c) 10 items dealing with interrogative of simple sentence in simple present tense.

The sources of data of this study were the variations of the students' answers on affirmative, negative, and interrogative sentences of simple

sentences in simple present tense. The variations of the students' answers on simple sentences of simple present tense were analyzed into: (1) auxiliary verbs, (2) ordinary verbs, and (3) sentence patterns. Furthermore, the researcher herself checked the students' answers. The researcher classified the correct forms and the incorrect forms of variations of simple sentence in simple present tense for every item, and focused more on the incorrect forms.

To analyze the data, the researcher checked the students' answers sheets. The researcher classified the incorrect forms of the students' answers for every item on simple sentences in simple present tense. The analysis was intended to identify the characteristics of simple sentences in simple present tense made by the students.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Items to test the affirmative sentences of simple sentence in simple present tense were number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10. Variations of the students'answers indicated that the students missed to use and missed to form of main verbs, suffix –s/-es, and missed to form tense in simple present tense. And they used main verbs incorrectly. Meanwhile, items to test the negative sentences of simple sentences in simple present tense were number 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20. Variations of the students' answers indicated that the students missed to use of auxiliary do/does, and missed to form the main verbs in present tense. And they used auxiliary do/does or main verbs incorrectly. The students were confused to implement the rule of negative form of simple sentences of simple present tense in appropriate ways. Furthermore, items to test interrogative form of simple sentences in simple present tense were number 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, and 30. Variations of the students' answers indicated that the students missed to use of auxiliary do/does and main verbs in present form. And they used auxiliaries do/does incorrectly.

Taken the data into account, the characteristics of students answer on simple sentence of simple present tense were: i) the students applied one rule of grammar to other similar feature, and ii) double makers such as: does + not + teaches were used together in using auxiliary do/does, and iii) the students were failed to form the correct main verbs into proper context.

With this in mind, this research gave confirmation to the theory of natural order hypothesis stated by Krashen (1992:85). Krashen states that in the early steps, learners of English will tend to use one rule for every similar feature of language.

In addition, the main finding was the students were implementing incomplete knowledge in constructing simple sentences of simple present tense as a result of imperfectness of understanding the rules. The main characteristics

of the students' simple sentences of simple present tense were missing to use of auxiliaries do/does in negative and interrogative sentences, missing to form the main verbs in simple present tense, missing to form tense in simple present tense, and it was also found that the students missed to add the auxiliary be and will.

Concerning the research finding, two statements can be formulated. First, students applied generalization rules in constructing simple sentences of simple present tense for each type of sentences (positive, negative, and interrogative). Second, students are getting difficulties in applying rule of forming auxiliary verbs for singular and plural form, and also the students were confused to apply the main verbs in positive, negative, and interrogative sentences.

Variations of students' answers in affirmative form of simple sentence in simple present tense were characterized by omitting suffixes –s/es on main verbs for singular subject, misforming the main verbs in present tense, misforming tense in simple present tense, and adding the auxiliary be. Samples of the students' answers were as follows:

(1) The earth move around the sun.

(6) The children will play in the yard.

All the sentences above were wrong, the reconstruction of the sentences should be read as follows:

(1) The earth moves around the sund.

(6) The children play in the yard.

Variations of the students' answers in negative form of simple sentences in simple present tense were characterized by omitting the auxiliary do/does, mis forming the auxiliary do/does, misf orming tense in simple present tense, and adding suffixes –s/es. Variations of the students' answers in negative forms of simple sentences in simple present tense were as follows:

(11) They not usually remember their books.

(13) The sun did not set in the west.

All the sentences above were wrong, the reconstruction of the sentences should be read as follows:

(11) They do not usually remember their books.

(13) The sun does not set in the west.

Variations of the students' answers in interrogative forms of simple sentence of simple present tense were characterized by omitting the auxiliary verbs do/does, using of wrong form of auxiliary verbs do/does, mis forming tense in simple present tense, and mis forming the main verbs of present tense. Variations of the students' answers in interrogative forms of simple sentences in simple present tense were exemplified below.

(21) My mother cooks delicious food?

(24) Does they do their homework together?

All the sentences were wrong, the reconstruction of the sentences should be read as follows:

(21) Does my mother cook delicious food?

(24) Do they do their homework together?

This result is supported by previous researches. For instance, Subroto (2017) reported that students often made errors of omission and mis formation when constructing simple present tense sentences, especially when forming questions and negative sentences. Similarly, Zalukhu (2023) found that many students omitted auxiliaries such as do/does or misused them, which aligns closely with the errors in interrogative and negative sentence formation found in the present study.

In Yulisa and Amelia's (2014) research, students were found to have moderate ability across all three sentence forms (affirmative, negative, and interrogative).

Furthermore, Afriani and Fatmawati (2014) emphasized that while students could often form simple sentences, they still made common errors with subject-verb agreement and verb suffixes, especially with third-person singular—a problem also seen in our findings for affirmative sentence construction.

After selecting, classifying and analyzing the data about the characteristics of simple sentences in simple present tense made by the students, the researcher found some interpretations as follows:

Students' growing competence about the rules of tenses is tried to apply to any sentences. Since they understand only limited rules, they take overgeneralization to any types of sentences they write. This causes students apply one rule to any sentences. Consequently, they put plural verbs for singular verbs, and singular auxiliary verbs for plural auxiliary verbs.

In addition, the mother tongue interference is usually caused the students make errors about the language they learn. It clearly seems that the students try to confirm the mother tongue rules into English rules. A similar form of Indonesian sentences and English sentences but they are different in nature often makes the students take for granted to translate.

Moreover, the students are in far from conscious of applying the rules of simple present tense. This is due to the nature of English and Indonesian sentences are quite different. Indonesian sentences do not distinguish conjugation of the verbs into singular and plural, and also tenses. Thus, the students write: She buy lipsticks monthly, instead of: She buys lipsticks monthly.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the purpose of the study, research findings, and data analysis procedures discussed previously, it can be concluded that the characteristics of simple sentences in simple present tense made by the seventh grade students of SMP Negeri 7 Samarinda were: (a) omitting suffixes –s/es on main verbs for singular subject in affirmative forms, (b) misforming the main verbs in present tense, (c) mis forming tense in simple present tense, (d) misusing auxiliary

do/does in negative and interrogative form, (e)) omitting auxiliary do/does in negative and interrogative forms and (f) misadding auxiliaries be and will.

Moreover, since this research focused on the features of the data taken from students' worksheet, identification to the data might be rough because it is more focused on the correct and incorrect forms of the answers. Therefore, future research is suggested to develop the focus of identification in oral data. After written test is given, the researcher is suggested to observe students' oral performance.

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