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# THE CORRELATION BETWEEN THE SIMPLE PAST TENSE ACHIEVEMENT AND WRITING ACHIEVEMENT IN RECOUNT TEXT OF THE FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

By

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## ABSTRACT

Grammar plays an important role in language skills, such as speaking, reading, listening and also writing. However, in a real situation, the first-year students of senior high school who have learned the simple past tense still have difficulties in applying the tense when they are writing an essay, that is a recount text. Since the simple past tense is related with recount text, the students have to master the simple past tense itself; not only the rules but also the use of the simple past tense in writing.

There were seventy-five students of YPPI I senior high school taken as the subject of this study. The tests given were about grammar, that is the simple past tense and writing, that is a recount text. The scores obtained were computed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation formula.

The result shows that there is a positive correlation. This means that there is a correlation between the simple past tense achievement and recount writing achievement. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) is accepted.

Keywords: correlation, the simple past tense, and recount achievement.

## INTRODUCTION

Learning a language means learning its four skills, namely: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students should master those four skills if they want to be able to deliver their ideas, opinion, feeling, and so on. However, the mastery of these four skills is influenced by the mastery of language components. One of the language components that affects the mastery of language skills is grammar. According to Andrews (2006, p.42) Grammar covers word order, clause and phrase structure, and the classification of part of speech (e.g. noun, verb, predicate, clause, etc.). The lack of grammar knowledge makes it difficult for students to express their ideas in writing

appropriately. By learning grammar, students will be able to make a grammatically correct sentence in writing. Fellowes (2007) says that "Writing is an expressive mode of communication and involves the construction of texts in ways that ensure specific purposes are realized and that clear messages are effectively conveyed to the reader/s"

However, in a real situation, the first-year students of senior high school who have learned the simple past tense still have difficulties in applying the tense to their writing composition that is recount text. On the other hand, since the simple past tense is related with recount text, the students have to master the

simple past tense itself; not only the rules but also the use of the simple past tense in writing context. If they make a mistake in using the simple past tense, it means that they are not capable in writing their recount composition. As a result, the readers may get confused while they read the composition and also they may have difficulties in understanding the content of the composition.

Interested in finding out how far the students' grammar achievement, in this study the simple past tense, has a relationship with their recount writing achievement, the writer decides to make a study entitled "The Correlation Between The Simple Past Tense Achievement and Writing Achievement in Recount Text of the First-Year Students of Senior High School."

## GRAMMAR

According to Hartwell (1985, p.109), there are three definitions of "grammar":

First, "grammar" is "the set of formal patterns in which the words of a language are arranged in order to convey larger meanings. Second, "grammar" is "the branch of linguistic science which is concerned with the description, analysis, and formulation of formal language patterns." Third, "grammar" is "linguistic etiquette" that is, the identification of the proper structures to be used in a language

First definition of grammar by Hartwell is in line with Annandale (as cited in Fellowes, 2007, p.183) "Grammar refers to the rules and systematic relationships that are used to organize a language and its meaning. Grammar is used to make meaning during reading, writing, listening, speaking and viewing". In this case, it is important to teach students grammar in order to produce a good output in each skill, especially in writing.

Chin (2000) states that knowing grammar means understanding what text means correctly based on the rule of grammar itself. In addition, the role of grammar becomes more important when we have to speak or write in a foreign language.

According to Widodo (2006) grammar is taught to provide the basis for a set of language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. In listening and speaking, grammar plays an important part in expressing spoken language (e.g. expressions). In reading, grammar allows the students to comprehend sentence interrelationship in a paragraph, a passage and a text. In the context of writing, grammar allows the students to put their ideas into clear sentences so that they can successfully communicate in a written form.

## THE SIMPLE PAST TENSE

According to Cowan (2008, p.359), the simple past tense is used for activities or situations that began and ended in the past. For example, *SoekarnoHatta wrote the proclamation text.*

There are two forms of simple past tense. They are regular verbs and irregular verbs.

### 1. Regular verbs

Regular verbs in the simple past tense are formed by adding *-ed* to the infinitive form, for example:

Walk - walked

Hope - hoped

Agree - agreed

In negative and interrogative statements, the auxiliary *did* is required and the verb changes to the infinitive form. For example:

walked(-) → **did** not walk

(?) **did** ..... walk?

While the verb “*be*” in the simple past tense, has two forms; they are **was** and **were**. **Was** is used for the subject pronouns *I, he, she, it* and **were** for *you, they, and we*.

## 2. Irregular verbs

Irregular verbs in the simple past tense do not have specific rules to form them. The forms change or remain the same, and the students have to practice a lot.

For example:

see - saw  
tell - told  
make - made

In negative and interrogative statements, the verb changes to the infinitive form.

For example:

saw → (-) **did** not see  
(?) **did** ..... see?

## WRITING

Fellowes (2007) explains that writing is an expressive mode of communication which involves the construction of texts that have a function to ensure that specific purposes are realized and that clear messages are effectively conveyed to the reader/s. The text construction in writing consists of its generic structure based on the chosen text type.

To become a good writer, the students need to understand the steps in writing process, learning and practicing them one step at a time. Harris (1969, p.68) explains that there are five general components in writing a composition:

1. Content : the substance of the writing; the ideas expressed
2. Form : the organization of the content

3. Grammar : the employment of grammatical forms and syntactic patterns
4. Style : the choice of structures and lexical items to give a particular tone or flavor to the writing
5. Mechanics: the use of the graphic conventions of the language.

## RECOUNT TEXT

According to Anderson (2003), a recount text is a piece of text retelling past events, usually in the order in which they happened. In line with Anderson’s idea, Derewianka (1990) states that we reconstruct past experience in recount, a recount text is the unfolding sequence of events over time.

Derewianka (1990) points out that there are three types of recount text:

### 1. Personal recount

Personal recount is retelling of an activity that the writer was personally involved in. (*e.g. diary entry*)

### 2. Factual recount

Factual recount is recording a particular incident. (*e.g. news report, police report, and a report of science experiment*)

### 3. Imaginative recount

Imaginative recount is writing an imaginary role and giving details of events. (*e.g. A day in the life of a pirate; How I invented...*)

According to Derewianka (1990), basically, recount text has three generic structures, they are:

*Orientation* - provides the reader with background information needed to understand the text. e.g. who, when, where.

*Sequence of events* – series of events typically ordered in chronological order.

*Re-orientation* – A summary statement/an evaluative comment/a return to the starting point.

## **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GRAMMAR AND WRITING**

Donovan (2014) states that grammar, spelling, and punctuation are the most basic components of good writing. Students who are good in writing gain great benefits from developing skills in grammar. Whenever they write and get confused on some technicality like putting a comma after the sentence and placing the words in a right order, if they learn grammar, eventually these kinds of problems will not interrupt the flow of their writing. In fact, their writing will be understandable by the reader because grammatically correct texts are easier to read.

According to Graham and Perin (2007), some students who have poor writing skill often write sentences incorrectly, their sentences in writing tend to often follow a simple and stereotyped format. This happened because they are lack of grammar knowledge, so they could not express their idea while they are writing. Here, if the students master the grammar, the rules of grammar will help them to manage the way of their writing, and ensure that their writing can be easily understood by the people who read it.

## **PREVIOUS STUDIES**

There are similar studies conducted by some researchers: Hudson (2001), Hillocks (1986), and Pranata (2007).

Hillocks (1986) surveyed many studies of the effects of sentence combining (compound sentence), and found them positive at all levels (grade 2 to adult). Sixty percent show significant

gains in syntactic maturity; thirty percent non-significant gains; ten percent no gains."

Richard Hudson (2001). In his research he tried to find out whether grammar could improve writing skill or not. The grammar test was parts of speech that were given to the students of elementary school grade three and six. The result of his study showed that grammar teaching improved children's writing skills.

GiandaPranata (2007) investigated the correlation between structure and writing of the English department students of Widya Mandala Surabaya. The structure involves part of speech and tenses, and the writing genre under his study is narrative. In his study, Pranata did not asses the students' ability in structure and writing; instead he obtained the scores of those two subject matters from the final term scores and from the lecturers. The statistical result shows that the r value was 0,574 which meant there is a correlation between grammar and writing.

Those studies are an input for the writer to enrich the writer's knowledge about the correlation between grammar and writing. There are two variables used in this study, they are grammar score and writing score. The variables is limited to find out whether the students could apply their grammar knowledge of simple past tense in a composition of recount text or not. Meanwhile, the present study has a similarity and difference with Pranata's study. The similarity is that his study and the present study deal with the correlation between grammar and writing and the difference is that the present study uses first-year students of senior high school as the subject. Next, the instruments that are used are grammar and writing test. The writer gave the test to the sample and analyzed the result of the tests.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

R	$r^t$	Interpretation
0.78	0.279	High and significant

This study is classified as correlation study since it describes the relationship between the score of grammar and the score of writing. This study uses a quantitative research design; it is a non-experimental correlation study. The subject of this study is the first-year students of YPPI I Senior High School Surabaya. Only three classes which are used as a subject, they are X1, X3, and X4. X1 became a pilot class and the other two classes became a sample. The tests given were grammar test which was the simple past tense and writing test which

correlation coefficient is high. After the calculation of the correlation coefficient, the significance of the correlation coefficient should be tested with the critical value of r product moment.

At the level of significance 5% with the number of the students (n) 50, the value of r is 0.78, the result of the critical value ( $r^t$ ) was 0.279. This means that the r, which was 0.78 is bigger than  $r^t$  which was 0.279, so the correlation is significant.

Here is the result of the correlation:

After the writer calculated the coefficient correlation and compared the result with the critical value of r product moment, the writer had to analyze the total points which were obtained based on the ESL composition profile. The profile

(n) 50	LANGUAGE				
	CONTENTS	ORGANIZATION	VOCABULARY	USE	MECHANICS
	13-30	7-20	7-20	7-20	2-5
TOTAL	1212	809	755	763	192
AVERAGE	24.24	16.18	15.1	15.26	3.84
%	80.8%	80.9%	75.5%	76.3%	76.8%

was a recount text.

The result of grammar and writing scores were computed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation formula. Here is the formula (Horvath, 1985:262):

$$r = \frac{n \cdot \sum xy - \sum x \cdot \sum y}{\sqrt{\{n(\sum x^2) - (\sum x)^2\} \{n(\sum y^2) - (\sum y)^2\}}}$$

## THE RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The correlation coefficient between the simple past tense achievement and writing achievement in recount text after the calculation is 0.78.

According to the criteria of the correlation coefficient stated by Nyoman Arcana (1996, p.59), the value of this

contains contents, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics.

The reason why the writer calculated the total point was she would like to know which writing components that really influenced students' writing. The results are as follows:

Based on the results of students' writing above, one of the five components provided by ESL writing composition showed that students' writing organization had the highest percentage 80.9% of all components. The writing organization requires the students' compositions to be well organized, cohesive and fluent in expressing or stating their ideas. Based on

the average result, which is 16.18, the students writing organization tends to be very close to 17 in the range of 14 – 17 as in the profile. It means that their writing organization is considered good.

The second component that influenced the students' writing is the content with the percentage of 80.8%. This component requires the students to be able to develop the ideas substantially. The students are supposed to be knowledgeable about the topic they are writing. Based on the average result which is 24.24, the students' writing content tends to be close to 26. This means that the students were able to develop their idea well.

The third component, mechanics, influenced the students' writing with the percentage of 76.8%. Mechanics involves, among others, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing. Based on the result of the average, which is 3.84, the students' writing mechanics ability tends to be very close to 4. This means that the students could spell words correctly, know when to punctuate and capitalize. As a result, the students' writing mechanics ability is considered good.

The fourth component that influenced the students' writing with the percentage of 76.3% is language use. This component is usually called "grammar" which requires the students to use the tense, number, and articles appropriately. It also requires the students to be able to construct the complex or simple sentences effectively. By looking at the

average of the language use, which is 15.26, the language use tends to be close enough to 17. It means that the language use is considered good.

The last component that influenced the students' writing with the percentage of 75.5% is vocabulary. To gain the maximum point of the vocabulary, the students have to be able to master the word form, to use the word/idiom effectively and appropriately. Based on the average result, which is 15.1, this component tends to be close to 17 between the range of 14 – 17. Thus, the students' vocabulary in their writing is considered good.

## CONCLUSION

After the writer examined and analyzed the data, she concluded that there is a correlation between the simple past tense achievement and writing achievement in recount text. Although the result showed that there is a positive correlation between the simple past tense achievement and writing achievement in recount text, it does not mean that only language use or grammar that could influence the students' writing. In fact, there are also some other factors that influence students' writing in writing a recount text. Since writing has five components, which are content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics, the writer also analyzed the points from each component that were determined by the raters to be the score for that particular component.

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