

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENTS' MASTERY OF SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT AND THEIR WRITING ABILITY IN RECOUNT TEXT

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Abstract: This study is aimed to discover whether there is a correlation between students' mastery of subject-verb agreement and their writing ability in recount text. The sample of the study was 34 students of X MIPA 4 which was randomly selected from the tenth-grade students of SMAN 1 Manyar. This research used a quantitative correlational research design. There were two tests used in collecting the data for the research. The first test was subject-verb agreement mastery test that consisted of 30 items divided into 20 multiple choice and 10 fill in the blank. The second test was recount text writing test about historical event happened in the past. The finding of the research revealed that the correlation coefficient was 0.370, and Sig. value (2-tailed) was 0.031 was lower than level of significance 0.05. It can be inferred that there is a correlation in a weak level between students' mastery of subject-verb agreement and their writing ability in recount text. It revealed that subject-verb agreement had less influence in students' recount text writing ability.

Key words: Correlation, subject-verb agreement mastery, writing ability, recount text

INTRODUCTION

Writing is an activity of finding out, arranging, and putting the idea then reshaping and revising to produce the final copy (Shafira, 2021). However, most of EFL learners consider that writing skill is difficult to master (Fitria, 2016). This is because they have to pay attention to grammar and the coherence of the paragraph when writing a text. Further, Shafira (2021) explains that writing is considered to be challenging because the EFL learners are not only finding the right vocabulary and

using the right grammar when writing, but also exploring and expressing thoughts in a foreign language. Saragih, Silalahi, & Pardede (2014) also state that writing is one of difficult skills for EFL learners because they lack of knowledge about grammar, vocabulary, and spelling.

There are many genres of text that should be learned by EFL learners. Based on the 2013 Indonesia curriculum, some genres of texts that need to be learned by the tenth grade students in English subjects are descriptive texts, recount texts, narrative texts, procedural texts, and news items (Shafira, 2021). Each of them has different purposes, generic structures, and language features that can be used in the text. In this case, the researcher's focus is on recount text which has learned since in the junior high school because some students have difficulties in writing a recount text. However, Yulianawati (2018) stated that some students were found to have difficulty in writing recount text in terms of the use of tense, vocabulary, and specific participants.

Recount text has purposes which are to list and describe past experience through retelling the events in the order in which they happened (Hasanah, 2020). The generic structure of recount text consists of orientation, records of events, and re-orientation (Situmorang and Hartoyo, 2020). There are five types of recount texts, which are personal recount, factual recount which can be delivered as historical recount, imaginary recount, procedural recount, and critical recount text (Putri, 2020). In this research, the researcher chooses factual recount in the form of historical recount text based on the tenth grade English syllabus.

In writing, of course it cannot be separated with grammar. To write a recount text, EFL learners must understand the grammar rules to make a good writing. According to Cowan (2008), grammar is defined as a set of rules that describes how words can be arranged to form correct sentences in a certain language. Therefore, grammar must be mastered to be able to master writing skills. However, it is not only grammar that must be considered when writing paragraphs, but also other aspects such as punctuation, spelling, etc. Helmiati, Sudarsono, and Susilowati (2019) states that learners not only have to pay attention to grammar in writing but also have to pay attention to vocabulary, spelling, and sentence patterns.

Grammar lessons cover a wide variety of subjects, including tenses, subject-verb agreement, and the others. Subject-verb agreement means that the subject and its verb should agree one another. Subject-verb agreement is important material that should be learned by EFL learners. According to Mahdalena (2021), subject-verb agreement is a basic grammar that EFL learners should understand because it affects EFL learners in many aspects. The important aspects in writing are conducting sentences, paragraphs, or essays which require proper subject-verb agreement. Subject-verb agreement is a grammatical rule that requires that singular subjects and singular verbs must concur, as well as that plural or compound subjects and plural verbs must concur (Sutomo, 2011). Moreover, Kurniawan and Seprizanna (2016) stated that there is an agreement in the simple present tense and the simple past tense. In simple present tense, the subject and the verb should agree each other in both

verbal and nominal form. While in simple past tense, the agreement between subject and verb is only in nominal form.

However, in several studies, subject-verb agreement is found to be one of the most common errors in writing. This is due to the difference in sentence structure between Indonesian and English. In an Indonesian sentence, there is no change in the verb even though the subject is singular or plural, and the tense is present, past, or future. On the other hand, the subject and the timing of the action determine the verb in every English sentence (tense).

In a study entitled *Learners' Errors in Writing the Recount Text* by Khoirunisa, Suryanti, and Mariam (2021), learners' errors in using subject-verb agreement become the second frequent type of errors after errors in using past tense. The results showed that the frequency of errors in subject-verb agreement were 21 out of 31 students. It also explained that the students made errors because of having difficulties in recognizing the subject that made the students cannot produce the correct form of the verb properly.

Moreover, the result of the study with the title *Students' Subject-Verb Agreement Errors in Writing Recount Text Made by Senior High School Students* that conducted by Mesrawati and Narius (2019) also shows that the EFL learners who participated still have difficulties in using the correct pattern of subject-verb agreement in their recount text writing. It is also stated by Pandapatan (2020) in his research that many students make mistakes in choosing the right verbs that match the subject which is not well enough to produce a good writing.

As stated that students have difficulties in writing recount text, and many of them have errors in using subject-verb agreement in the form of past tense when writing a recount text, the writer assumed that grammar especially subject-verb agreement has influence in writing ability in recount text. Having a good subject-verb agreement mastery can make the writers conveyed the messages to the readers more understandable. Thus, by connecting the mastery of subject-verb agreement to writing ability in recount text, the students could know that grammar mastery especially subject-verb agreement in the form of past tense give effect in their ability to write recount text.

Following the previous explanation above, the researcher would like to conduct a research related to subject-verb agreement mastery and writing ability in recount text. The researcher conducts this study in order to discover if there is any correlation between students' mastery of subject-verb agreement and their writing ability in recount text.

METHOD

The researcher used quantitative research with correlational design in conducting this research. A correlational design is a quantitative research method in which the researcher measures the degree of connection or relationship between two or more variables using the statistical method of correlational analysis (Creswell, 2012). The study was conducted at the tenth grade students of SMAN 1 Manyar in

Academic Year 2021/2022. The sample of the study was X MIPA 4 consisted of 34 students which was selected through cluster random sampling.

This research used test as the research instrument. There were two tests which were subject-verb agreement test and writing test. The two tests were made by the researcher herself and validated by the writing lecturer. The subject-verb agreement mastery test consisted of 30 items which are divided into 20 multiple choice questions with four options and 10 fill in the blank questions. Meanwhile, the recount text writing test was about historical events in Indonesia. The topic of the recount text was Proclamation of Indonesian Independence, and the writing should consist of 100 - 150 words.

After obtaining the data, the researcher analyzed students' mastery of subject-verb agreement and analyzed students' writing based on Tribble (1996) assessment scale. The analysis was related to the calculation to answer the problem statement and test the hypothesis.

Before performing a correlation analysis, the data should be tested for the normality. The test was employed to determine whether or not the data was normally distributed. In this study, the normality of the test was calculated using one sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov on SPSS 20.0.

The researcher then analyzed the data using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation technique to discover the relationship between students' mastery of subject-verb agreement and their writing ability in recount text. The researcher utilized SPSS 20.0 to measure, calculate, and analyze the data obtained from the

variables. To interpret the result of the correlation coefficient, the researcher used the “r table value” to know the level of the correlation coefficient as follows:

Table 1: The Interpretation of “r table value”

Coefficient	Interpretation
0	No Correlation
0.01 - 0.20	Very Weak (Very Low)
0.21 - 0.40	Weak (Low)
0.41 - 0.60	Moderate
0.61 - 0.80	Substantial (High)
0.81 - 0.99	Very Strong (Very High)
1	Perfect

(Adopted from Helmiati, Sudarsono, and Susilowati, 2019)

Then, to find out the level of students’ subject-verb agreement mastery, the researcher classified the score of the students’ tests. There are five categories in classifying the level of students’ subject-verb agreement mastery which are as the following:

Table 2: Classification of Students’ Level of Subject-Verb Agreement Mastery

Score	Category	Level
90 – 100	Excellent	Outstanding
75 – 89	Good	Above average
60 – 74	Fair	Satisfactory
50 – 59	Less	Below average
0 – 49	Poor	Insufficient

(Adopted from Arikunto and Suharsimi, 2009)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Before conducting a correlation analysis, the normality test was carried out first to know whether or not the data was normally distributed. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was employed in this investigation to determine normalcy. If the significance value is more than 0.05, the data is said to be normally distributed.

Table 3: Normality of the Test

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test		
		Unstandardized Residual
N		34
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	0E-7
	Std. Deviation	9.44022068
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.162
	Positive	.097
	Negative	-.162
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		.943
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.336

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

Based on the table above, it is known that the significance value is 0.336 which is higher than level of significance 0.05. This means that the distribution of data on the subject-verb agreement mastery and recount text writing ability is normally distributed.

Moreover, to determine the relationship between students' mastery of subject-verb agreement and their writing ability in recount texts the researcher employed Pearson Product Moment Correlation in this study. The rejection hypothesis has a significance level of 0.05. The following table shows the outcomes of the calculation using Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation

Correlations			
		SVA_Mastery_ Score	Writing_Score
SVA_Mastery_Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.370*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.031
	N	34	34
Writing_Score	Pearson Correlation	.370*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	
	N	34	34

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result of the calculation above showed that the Pearson correlation is 0.370 and the Sig. value (2-tailed) is 0.031 which is less than 0.05. It means that the correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. It also indicates that H_a is accepted and H_o is rejected. Thus, it can be stated that there is a correlation in between students' mastery of subject-verb agreement and their writing ability in recount text.

Moreover, the correlation coefficient 0.370 means that between the two variables which are students' mastery of subject-verb agreement and their writing ability in recount text had a positive correlation. To know the level of correlation between students' subject-verb agreement mastery and writing ability in recount text, the researcher referred the result of Pearson correlation above to the r table value that can be seen in Table 1. The result of r analysis is 0.370 which found in the range of 0.21 – 0.40 in the r table value. It means that the level of relationship between students' mastery of subject-verb agreement and their writing ability in recount text is in weak correlation. It can be inferred that the students who have a bad score in

subject-verb agreement does not really mean have a bad score in writing and vice versa.

Furthermore, the result of the analysis on the level of the students' subject-verb agreement mastery at SMAN 1 Manyar showed that the minimum score was 6 while the maximum score was 94, and the mean score was 47.03. Based on the mean score, the students' overall level of subject-verb agreement mastery was insufficient. To be more detail, the level of the students was grouped into five categories which are presented as follows:

Table 5: The Level of Students' Subject-Verb Agreement Mastery

Score	Category	Level	Percentage
90 – 100	Excellent	Outstanding	2.94%
75 – 89	Good	Above average	5.88%
60 – 74	Fair	Satisfactory	20.59%
50 – 59	Less	Below average	5.88%
0 – 49	Poor	Insufficient	64.71%

In the table above, it is shown that the percentage of the students who got the score below 49 was 64.71%. It means that most of students' mastery of subject-verb agreement is in insufficient level. Meanwhile, the students who got score 60 to 74 had the second highest percentage of 20.59%. This means that there were 20.59% of students who had fair category or satisfactory level. The data also showed that the students who got score 75 to 89 had the same percentage as the students who got score 50 to 59, which was 5.88%. It implies that there were 5.88% of students who had a good category or above average level and 5.88% of students who had a less category or below average level in mastering subject-verb agreement. Meanwhile, the

students who got score above 90 had the lowest percentage. There were 2.91% of students who had excellent category or outstanding level in the subject-verb agreement mastery.

To sum up, the students who had poor category or insufficient level had the highest percentage in the subject-verb agreement mastery which was 64.71%. Therefore, the level of majority of the students' mastery of subject-verb agreement was insufficient.

However, the weak correlation is affected by some factors. The students have bad score in subject-verb agreement is due to the students' lack of understanding about subject-verb agreement in the form of past tense. Many of them were confused in determining to be "was/were" that must be used as the verb and determining the past form of the verb that agrees with the subject. This is in accordance with the study conducted by Kurniawan, Nadun, and Bochari (2017) who stated that the students had an error in determining regular verb, irregular verb, and auxiliary verb in the form of past tense. It can be caused by inadequate of seriousness and attention to the materials given in the classroom, and they lack of training their understanding. It also can be caused by the teacher who only concentrated with one aspect from the lesson plan, or the materials which they made by herself did not relate with the lesson plan, so the teaching goals could not be gained. Hence, the students were unable to master the learning materials successfully. Meanwhile, the factors that affect the students to make their writing better are their capability to think creatively, develop their ideas, and use the good vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation, etc. This implies that the

students, who had insufficient level in subject-verb agreement in their writing, have performed well in other aspects that are frequently applied on the writing assessment scale.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

After completing the investigation and data analysis, the researcher can conclude that there is a correlation in a weak level between students' mastery of subject-verb agreement and their writing ability in recount text in the tenth-grade students of SMAN 1 Manyar in the academic year 2021/2022. This means that getting a bad score in the subject-verb agreement does not really mean getting a bad score in writing a text and vice versa. The result also showed that the level of the students' subject-verb agreement mastery in SMAN 1 Manyar is insufficient.

However, the weak correlation is affected by some factors. The students had bad score in subject-verb agreement is due to the students' lack understanding about subject-verb agreement in the form of past tense, inadequate of seriousness and attention to the materials given in the classroom, and the teacher could not achieved the teaching goals. Meanwhile, the students who had good score in writing recount text might be due to their capability to think creatively, develop their ideas, and use the good vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation, etc.

In light of the results and the conclusion of the study, the writer conveyed some suggestions related to teaching and learning English. Since the result of the subject-verb agreement mastery test was categorized as poor or insufficient level, the

writer suggests to the tenth grade students of SMAN 1 Manyar that they need to be serious and pay attention to the materials given in the classroom. They also need to learn more in order to improve their subject-verb agreement mastery in the form of past tense, especially in the use of to be “was/were” and the past form of the verbs that agree with the subject. Therefore, grammar can give greater influence on the students’ writing ability.

For English teachers, the writer suggests the teacher to apply any teaching method that is suitable to teach English, especially in grammar and writing, since many of the students have an error in using subject-verb agreement in the form of past tense. The teacher should deepen the students’ knowledge in the use of grammar in every language skills especially writing in their teaching, so the students can be able to use proper language structure in order to create better writing.

For future researchers who will carry out any further research on the same topic or field, the researcher suggests to conduct the research using different text genres, such as descriptive, narrative, etc. The future researchers can also use recount text but with different types, such as personal recount text or others. The future researchers can also conduct the research with larger samples since the researcher only used 34 students as the sample in this study, and ensure that the instruments used is in accordance with the material being taught, so the result of the test will be more relevant and reliable.

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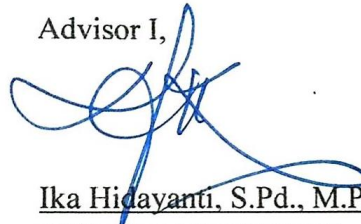
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