

IMPROVING STUDENTS' SKILL IN WRITING SHORT PARAGRAPH BY USING SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE AT FIRST SEMESTER STISIP PERSADA BUNDA PEKANBARU

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ABSTRACT

The study purposes to determine whether writing short paragraph by using present tense can improve the students' writing skill. In this research, the writer focuses on the students' simple present tense mastery and the ability to write a short paragraph. The research intents onto the students' ability English functional writing, especially in writing simple paragraph the first semester Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Sosial dan Politik (STISIP) Persada Bunda Pekanbaru. The participants are the first semester students of Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Sosial dan Politik (STISIP) Persada Bunda Pekanbaru. There were 13 students. The research found that writing short paragraph by using simple present tense could improve the students writing's skill. This research is a qualitative research. The writer collected the data employ the test and the documentation technique. The test is written test of simple paragraph in English subject for the students at the first semester of STISIP Persada Bunda Pekanbaru. Then, the students' sheet were corrected by scoring rubric of short paragraph by using simple present tense. Finally, the writer analyzes the students' score.

Keywords: *Simple Paragraph, Writing Ability*

Introduction

Basically, language is a means to convey idea, thought, opinion and feeling. In Indonesia, English is the first foreign language regarded the importance for the aim of absorbing and developing science, technology, and culture, as well as developing relationship with other nations around the world. In accordance with the importance of the English role, Indonesian students need to be able to communicate in English if they take a participation effectively in many areas of the national economy, social and political life. Thus, they need a plenty of opportunities to practice communication in interesting and useful situations. In Indonesia, English has been taught as a foreign language. Ramelan (1992; 1) states that "English has been taught in our country as the first foreign language since the proclamation in Indonesia on the 17th of August 1945." It is taught as a

compulsory subject in junior high school and senior high school and in universities or institutes for several terms. Even so, it has been tried to be taught to the students of elementary schools.

English is one of the subjects taught in STISIP Persada Bunda. It is considered by students as one of the difficult subjects to learn. There are many reasons why they consider English as a difficult subject. Raimes (1983:3) mentions that when a second or foreign language is learned, it is learned to communicate with other people: to understand them, to talk to them, to read what they have written and to write to them. Therefore, the students can be said to have mastered English if they are able to use it either receptively through reading and listening or productively through speaking and writing.

Since having differences between their mother tongue from English languages, the students often find problems with grammar, vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, and the like. Nevertheless, the students are usually face difficulty in English grammar in arranging words into correct utterances or sentences. It means that grammar is one of the most important parts of English to communicate with others. When we communicate, both in written and spoken ways with other people, we should not only have a good vocabulary but also correct grammar. Therefore, without grammar, it is hard for people to understand what we say or write because grammar makes a string of words or utterances meaningful.

There are several rules in grammar that cannot be ignored. They are articles, parts of speech, sentence pattern, tense, etc. Part of the grammar that is considered to be most difficult to learn for Indonesian students is tenses. Simple present tense is the example. Frank (1972:66) states that "Simple present tense is used to express a habitual action with adverbs like usually, always, or often."

The use of simple present tense often makes students confused with its complexity, especially for the first semester of STISIP Persada Bunda Pekanbaru. They usually have some problems in finding out the verb form of simple present tense. They often write "He go to school everyday," instead of "He goes to school everyday." The third singular persons such as *he*, *she*, and *it* need suffix *-s* or *-es* for the verb. It shows that Indonesian students do not consider that in English

there are verbs formed in singular or plural. In Indonesian language, singular or plural forms do not affect the verb form.

In this project, I discuss students' English skill in writing short paragraph using simple present tense. Writing a simple sentence should be clear, vivid, and concrete. If a student has made a mistake in using simple present tense, it means that he/she is not competent yet in making his/her text. It makes the reader confused and difficult to understand what the writer means. Therefore, through descriptive text, I would like to find out the students' learning problems, to know the students' achievement and difficulties in learning the simple present tense. Wishon and Burks (1980:379) stated that "descriptive writing is used to create a visual image of people, places, even units of time days, times of day or seasons." Hopefully, it will help students in using the simple present tense.

Writing is a very complex skill. It is not an easy task for English teachers to teach it. Silva in Brown (2001:339) states "writing in a second language tends to be more constrained, more difficult and less effective than writing in the first language: second language writers plan less, revise for content less and less fluently and accurately than first language writers".

Many students in the first semester of STISIP Persada Bunda Pekanbaru have problems in writing short paragraphs. It can be seen from the students' writing achievement in the classroom, there are some aspects relate to their problems in writing short paragraph. Based on the observation of the students, they also have difficulty to explore the ideas in written form. Those problems affect the students to be bored in teaching learning process. They could not explore their ideas to write in a meaningful way although the theme has been already determined clearly.

Therefore, to overcome these problems, the researcher needs to teach writing short paragraph which is suitable for the first semester students of STISIP Persada Bunda Pekanbaru and it can improve their writing ability. The researcher considers that the problems in the students' writing skill are important to be solved.

Writing is a psychological activity of the language user to put information in the writing text. The written productive language skill is called writing. It is skill of a writer to communicate information to a reader or group of readers. Writing is a process of communication which uses conventional; graphic system to convey a message for reader. For many of foreign language learners, writing is considered as the most difficult skill because the involvement of several writing attributes.

On the other hand, based on the observation of the students, they also have difficulty to transfer the idea in writing. Those problems affect the students to be bored in teaching learning process. They could not explore their ideas as well to write although the theme has been already determined clearly.

There are some definitions of writing that are taken from resources, Dilay stated that writing only mode in which both linguistics manipulation task and communication task have given. According to Fauziati also gave statement that writing as a process is oriented to words work in progress and the development of new skills, rather than merely evaluative task, the classroom practises, therefore, will vary from each other. In other words, Nunan also stated that writing activity as commonly conceived, is highly sophisticated skill combining a number of diverse element, only of which are strictly linguistic.

Lennerberg in Brown states that writing is culturally specific, learned, behavior. We learn to write if we are members of a literate society and if only someone teaches us. According to Hornby, writing is the activity or occupation of writing.

Based on the statements above, it can be concluded that writing is an active and productive act. More clearly, writing is an act or process to produce some information in their mind that should be expressed into writing form. Writing will be the best if the students are guided on the rules defined. It usually refers to contents, organization, grammatical, usage and mechanics, sentence structure, mastery on vocabulary and so on.

Writing is an activity that can usefully be prepared for by work in the other skills of listening, speaking and reading. This preparation can make it possible for

words that have been used receptively to come into productive use. For example, in an English for academic purposes programme, learners can be involved in keeping issue logs which are a kind of project work.

In line with it, Anthony Seow cited by Richards and Renandya (2002:315) states that there are four main stages of the process of writing, that is planning, drafting, revising and editing. Planning or prewriting is an activity that encourages the students to write. Drafting is the process of gathering ideas for the first time. Revising is the stage of reviewing the texts on the basis of feedback given. Editing is the process of tidying up the texts for grammar, spelling, punctuation, diction, sentence structure and accuracy for preparing the final draft.

According to Brown, there were 12 microskills for writing skill as follow :

- a. Produce graphemes and orthographic patterns of English.
- b. Produce writing at an efficient rate of speed to suit the purpose.
- c. Produce an acceptable core of words and use appropriate word order patterns.
- d. Use acceptable grammatical systems (e.g., tense, agreement, pluralization), patterns, and rules.
- e. Express a particular meaning in different grammatical forms.
- f. Use cohesive devices in written discourse.
- g. Use the rhetorical forms and conventions of written discourse.
- h. Appropriately accomplish the communicative functions of written texts according to form and purpose.
- i. Convey links and connections between events and communicate such relations as main idea, supporting idea, new information, give information, generalization, and exemplification.
- j. Distinguish between literal and implied meanings when writing.
- k. Correctly convey culturally specific references in the context of the written text.
- l. Develop and use a battery of writing strategies, such as accurately assessing the audience's interpretation, using prewriting devices, writing with fluency in the first drafts, using paraphrases and synonyms, soliciting peer and instructor feedback, and using feedback for revising and editing.

The process of writing was the process of students in writing business application letter. The students should prepared themselves before writing. Based on Jeremy Harmer in his book, He decided the stages in writing process. There were planning, drafting, editing, and final draft. Sabarun states in Herlina, assessment is an integral part in the teaching of writing. It is a process of getting information about students' development and their achievement in the teaching and learning activity.

a. Process Assessment

Process approaches, in contrast to product approaches to writing, process approaches emphasize the act of writing itself, the means by which the text is created more than the text itself. A view of writing as a process that evolves through several stages as the writer discovers and molds meaning and adapts to the potential audience.

b. Product Assessment

Product approaches are defined by their emphasis on the end result of the writing process and essay, a letter, and so on. The underlying assumption of product approaches is that the actual writing is the last step in the process of writing. Product approaches reflect traditional, teacher-centered approaches to teaching in general. Specifically in the traditional composition class, the teacher assigns a writing task. Whether exercises or a composition, knowing what responses she or he expects: the students do the exercises or write the composition and the teacher evaluates the result.

The simple present tense refers to the action or situation that do not change frequently. It is used to describe habits or routines, to express opinions, or to make general statements of facts, the simple present can also be used to refer to the future. In English grammar, the simple present tense is a form of the verbs that refers to an action or event that is ongoing or that regularly take place in the present time (for example "it flies to the sky").

The simple present tense is the one which we use when an action is happening right now, or when it happens regularly (or unceasingly, which is why it's sometimes called present indefinite). The simple present tense is formed by

using the root form or by adding –s or –es to the end, depending on the person. Use the simple present to express the idea that an action is repeated or usual. The action can be a habit, a hobby, a daily event, a scheduled event or something that often happens. It can also be something a person often forgets or usually does not do.

Examples:

1. The car leaves every morning at 07.00 am.
2. The car does not leave at 08.00 am
3. When does the train usually leave ?
4. She always forgets her purse
5. He never forgets his wallet

The simple present can also indicate the speaker believes that a fact was true before, is true now, and will be true in the future. It is not important if the speaker is correct about the fact. It is also used to make generalization about people or things.

Examples:

1. Cats like fish
2. Birds do not like fish
3. Pekanbaru is in Indonesia
4. Pekanbaru is not in Malaysia
5. They are made of the glass

Speakers occasionally use simple present tense to talk about schedule events in the near future. This is most commonly done when talking about public transportation, but it can be used with other scheduled events as well.

Examples:

1. The train leaves tonight at 08.00 pm
2. The bus does not arrive at 4 am. It arrives at 4 pm
3. When do we board the plane ?
4. The class starts at 7 o'clock

5. When does class begin tomorrow ?

Speakers sometime use simple present tense to express the idea that an action is happening or not happening now. This can only be done with Non-Continuous Verbs and certain Mix-Verbs.

Examples:

1. I am here now
2. She is not here
3. He needs you now
4. He does not eat burger now
5. They eat apples

The following forms of simple present tense are:

a. Verbal

When the predicate is a verb, the sentence will be called “Verbal Sentence”

1. Positive form

Formula: **S + Verb + (s + es) + O**

Examples: My mother cooks fried rice every morning

He watches Television in the bedroom

2. Negative form

Formula : **S + Do/Does + (not) + Verb + O**

Examples: My brother does not read novel

They do not go to Campus

3. Interrogative form

Formula: **Do/Does + S + V1 + O?**

Examples: Does your sister go to the cinema?

Do you need those books ?

b. Non Verbal /Nominal

When the predicate in the sentence is a noun, pronoun, noun phrase, adjective or adverb. The sentence will be called “ Nominal Sentence”.

1. Positive form

Formula: **S + To Be + Noun/Adverb/Adjective**

Examples: The world is round

They are students

2. Negative form

Formula: **S + To Be + (not) + Noun/Adverb/Adjective**

Examples:

My bedroom is not clean

The mall is not big

3. Interrogative forms

Formula: **To Be + S + (not) + Noun/Adverb/Adjective**

Examples: Are you a doctor?

Is she a student?

There is Time Signal in simple present tense. Time signal are words and phrases that tell us when the event takes place. Time signal for simple present tense identify more than just one event. Remember that the simple present tense is used to repeated events.

a. Adverb of Time

Everyday	Every month	Every week	Every year
Every/ each	In the morning	One/ twice a day	Here /there

Note: adverb of time used in the first sentence or end sentence

Examples:

They watch Television every day

He does not read novel every month

Don't you write a letter twice a day ?

Do you read comics every year ?

b. Adverb of Frequency

Always	Never	Seldom
Often	Now	Sometimes

Note: adverb of frequency is often used before verb or after verb

Examples: They usually study English

They do not always study English

Do they seldom study English ?

Don't they seldom study English?

Based on the statement above we can conclude that simple present tense is a sentence construction which tells or shows the daily activities and general truth in the nominal or verbal form of positive, negative, interrogative, and negative interrogative sentences using its particular time signal.

Mastery is a great skill or knowledge about something which is had by someone. Meanwhile, Fullan defines that mastery is obviously necessary for effectiveness, but it is also means for achieving deeper understanding. It means that mastery is a complete of having control over something superiority in through knowledge of a subject. According to Messer, mastery is the broad knowledge and skill in understanding the worlds of physical objects. It can be concluded that mastery is have a broad skill of knowledge in understanding the objects.

According to Wener, Simple present tense refers to action or situation that do not change frequently. It is used to describes a habit or routines, to express opinions or to make general statements of fact, the simple present can also be used to refer to the future. It means that simple present tense is a sentence that use to express daily activity, habitual, general statement, and it can also be used to express the future.

Based on the statement, it can be concluded that simple present tense mastery is the students' skill to construct sentences which tells or shows daily

activities or general truth in the nominal or verbal forms of positive, negative, interrogative, and negative interrogative sentences using its particular time signals.

Method

This study is descriptive research. It is intended to find out the students' skill by writing short paragraphs. Best (2005: 25) says that descriptive research described the exist things or situation at the same time of the study. It means that this research did not tend to found a new theory but only verified and described the existing one. By implementing quantitative approach, it attempted to find out the students' mastery in short paragraph to improve their writing skill.

In this research, the data could be collected by using test. The test was a piece of paper that contains the themes that should be written in short paragraphs. The students wrote a short paragraph based on the themes given by the teacher. After counting and calculating the percentage of each score, then it was compare with the standard mastery in order to dermine whether a student was mastery to do the test or not.

The standard of mastery for an individual mastery of learning process is 75% of the test given. It means that if a student can answer 75% of the test correctly, s/he was categorized as mastery, and if it is below 75% s/he was categorized as nonmastery. Then, if 50% of the sample gets 75% or more, it means that students of STISIP Persada Bunda were categorized as mastery, but if less than that, they were categorized as non mastery. Next, the percentage of each score were compared with the standard of level mastery. The classification of the score levels used as a criterion in determining the level of students' mastery on the test

Finding and Discussion

The data of this research were the students' score in their writing comprehension to write short paragraph by using simple present tense. The

students' mastery in writing short paragraph and identified the basic elements in simple present tense can be seen in the following table :

Table 1. The students comprehension in writing short paragraph by using simple present tense

Students' number	Verbal Sentence	Non Verbal Sentence	Adverb of Time	Adverb of Freq.
1	√	√	-	√
2	√	√	√	√
3	√	√	-	-
4	√	√	-	-
5	√	√	-	-
6	√	√	√	√
7	√	√	√	√
8	√	√	√	√
9	-	√	-	-
10	√	√	-	-
11	√	√	√	√
12	-	√	-	-

From the table it can be seen not all of the students could identify four basic elements of short paragraph by using simple present tense (verbal sentence) forms. Most of them got difficulties in writing adverb of time and adverb of frequency, they just focused on verbal sentence and non verbal sentence. Just two of students could not write verbal sentence, they just focused on non verbal sentence.

Most of the students were easily in identified Verbal and Non Verbal Sentence. Two students could not identify Verbal Sentence and Non Verbal Sentence, seven students could not identify Adverb of Time, and six students could not identify Adverb of Frequency.

Table 2. The Classification of Students' Level Mastery

Students' Number	Category
Student 1	Good
Student 2	Excellent
Student 3	Good
Student 4	Good
Student 5	Good
Student 6	Excellent
Student 7	Excellent
Student 8	Excellent
Student 9	Fair
Student 10	Good
Student 11	Excellent
Student 12	Fair

CONCLUSION

In this section, the writer would like to give conclusion and suggestion about the result of the study. The conclusion of the study was the answer of problem of the study as stated in chapter I which the finding was based on the result of the data analysis. The suggestions are expected to make better improvement and motivation for students, teachers and the next researchers. So, almost of the students are good in writing short paragraph by using simple present tense.

Concerned with the conclusion, the writer would like to propose some suggestions that hopefully would be useful and valuable for the first semester

students of STISIP Persada Bunda Pekanbaru. The writer recommended the students to learn more in writing, especially in functional writing because it will help the students in fill the purpose of their assignment and their language skill in future.

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