A STUDY ON THE ABILITY OF THE FOURTH SEMESTER STUDENTS OF ENGLISH STUDY PROGRAM OF FKIP UNIVERSITY OF RIAU IN USING AGREEMENTS

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Abstract: This study was aimed to find out the ability of the fourth semester students of English Study Program of FKIP University of Riau in using agreements. The researcher used cluster random sampling technique to determine the sample. The samples were 26 students. The study was used to find out the ability in five types of agreements such as agreements with indefinite pronoun, agreements with expression of quantity, agreements with some irregularities, agreements with nouns with no singular form, and agreements with collective noun. Cloze procedure test was used to gain the data with the number of tests is 40 questions. The result of the study revealed that the total mean score was 56 which indicated students were in average level of ability. The highest score with the mean score 67.7 was in using agreements with nouns with no singular form, it is in good level. Whereas, the lowest score with the mean score 45.6 was in using agreements with collective noun, it is in poor level.

Keywords: Students' ability, Grammar, Agreements

STUDI TENTANG KEMAMPUAN MAHASISWA SEMESTER KE-4 PROGRAM STUDI BAHASA INGGRIS FKIP UNIVERSITAS RIAU DALAM MENGGUNAKAN PERSESUAIAN/KONKORD

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Abstract: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui kemampuan mahasiswa Semester Ke-empat Program Studi Bahasa Inggris FKIP Universitas Riau dalam menggunakan persesuaian/konkord. Peneliti menggunakan teknik cluster random sampling untuk menentukan sampel. Sampel berjumlah 26 mahasiswa. Penelitian ini digunakan untuk mengetahui kemampuan pada lima jenis persesuaian seperti persesuaian/konkord dengan kata ganti tak tentu, persesuaian/konkord dengan ekspresi kuantitas, persesuaian/konkord dengan beberapa ketidaktentuan, persesuaian/konkord dengan kata benda yang tidak memiliki bentuk tunggal, dan persesuaian/konkord dengan kata benda kolektif. Cloze procedure test digunakan untuk memperoleh data dengan jumlah test adalah 40 pertanyaan. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa nilai total rata-rata adalah 56 dari jumlah mahasiswa dikategorikan pada level rata-rata. Skor tertinggi dengan rata-rata 67.7 adalah dalam menggunakan persesuaian/konkord dengan kata benda yang tidak memiliki bentuk tunggal, yaitu berada pada level baik. Sedangkan level terendah dengan rata-rata 45.6 adalah dalam menggunakan persesuaian/konkord dengan kata benda kolektif yaitu berada pada level rendah.

Kata Kunci: Kemampuan mahasiswa, Tata bahasa, Persesuaian/Konkord

INTRODUCTION

English is generally acknowledged as the world's most important language. Learning English has a primary goal that is to make students knowledgeable and capable of using certain kinds of English language skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These four language skills are called the "macro-skills". This is in contrast to the "micro-skills" such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling (Aydogan, 2014). Furthermore, because of its importance for communication, English requires students master all components including grammar.

Grammar is the rules of forming words and combining them into sentences (Hornby, 1989). In other word, grammar is a set of rules of how words are combined together to form acceptable unit of meaning within a language in a sentence. Some important points of grammar are: its role is to control the use of language so we know how it puts together as well as how it works. It is not only about the correct structure of the sentence but also about the meaning. In addition, grammar is the support system of communication and we learn it to communicate better. Subasini (2013) added that in communication we cannot neglect the importance of grammar to enrich the beauty of its own mother tongue. It can be inferred that using the correct grammar is important to avoid misunderstandings and to help the listener to understand the speaker easily.

One of the parts of English grammar is agreements/concord. Agreement is defined as the systematic covariance between a semantic or formal property of one element and of another (Steele, 1978). It involves the variation of three main features such as number, gender, and person (Wechsler, 2009). Research conducted by Murshidi (2014) revealed that agreement is one of the most frequent grammatical errors with a repetition percentage of 60% among the students. Agreements can become very important when we want to express idea especially in writing in which all parts should be academically use the correct usage of the target language. And most academic writing corresponds subjects and verbs are expected to "agree" with each other in person and number, for example: we go vs. he goes. Generally, Subject-Verb Agreement errors will not cause severe communication problem – your meaning will still be understood. However, if agreements occur throughout your paper, readers are likely to conclude that you are lack proficiency in academic writing (Hacker, 2003).

The study is only concerning on five types of agreements such as agreements with indefinite pronoun, agreements with expression of quantity, agreements with irregularities, agreements with nouns with no singular form, and agreements with collective noun. The limitation is based on the wide scope of agreements itself, and some other factors such as according to other researchers who conducted the same research revealed that these five types are quite common errors among students especially in writing including either ESL or EFL (Phillips, 2001). For example when taking error analysis class, the students had to complete this sentence in term of collective noun: "when I came to her house last night, her family … (was/were) having dinner." The students tended to answer it incorrectly by using singular verb "was" to agree with "family" indicating unity other than "were" to indicate member. Whereas, actually it must be plural verb used.

There are some factors causing students get difficulties in grammar especially agreements. First, because of language transfer means the different patterns or rules between English and students' native language, hence the students mostly do not follow the grammatical structure of the target language but refer to their native language

(Murshidi, 2014). The students notice that in their L1, there is no rule which says that a singular subject requires a single form of verb (Surina, 2009). Second, misunderstanding of what they have learned. The last is caused by forgetfulness and carelessness during constructing a sentence or completing the tests. Therefore, the writer tends to take research at the fourth semester to know the real situation of the students' ability.

Based on the previous explanation, the writer is interested in conducting a research entitling: *A Study on the Ability of the Fourth Semester Students of English Study Program of FKIP University of Riau in Using Agreements.*

RESEARCH METODOLOGY

The research took place at English Study Program of FKIP University of Riau, Pekanbaru in the academic year 2014/2015. The data was collected within the period of two months beginning from October to November 2015. The population of this research is the fourth semester students of English Study Program of FKIP University of Riau by the total number of the students is 75 students in three classes namely class A, B and C. By using cluster random sampling which used to get the sample in a large population and was found the sample is class A consisted of 26 students and the tryout class is class B consisted of 28 students. This study used quantitative data in which the students were assessed by their score.

The instrument used to collect the data was in term of cloze procedure test. Jonz (1990) in Fransisca *et al* defined cloze procedure test is the test or practice of measuring language proficiency or language comprehension by requiring examinees to restore words that have been removed from otherwise normal text. Cloze tests are usually a minimum of two paragraphs in length in order to account for discourse expectations. It is typically every seventh word (plus or minus two) is deleted (known as fixed-ratio deletion), but many cloze test designers instead use a rational deletion procedure of choosing deletions according to the grammatical or discourse functions of the words (Brown, 2003). In this research, the writer deleted only the verb in which it accords with the subject in the five indicators. The term agreement can be seen in two tenses namely simple present tense in which if the subject is singular so the verb must be added by -s/-es; and be: *is* (for singular subject) and *are* (for plural subject). And in simple past tense by using be: *was* (if the subject is singular) and *were* (if the subject is plural). Therefore, the writer took these two tenses for the research instrument to collect the data.

There are five types of agreements concerned, they are: agreements with indefinite pronoun, agreements with expression of quantity, agreements with some irregularities, agreements with nouns with no singular form, and agreements with collective noun. The number of the test is 40 items with time allocation is 50 minutes to complete each questions.

The Blue Print of the Instrument

No.	Agreements	Number of Items
1.	Agreement with indefinite pronoun	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8
2.	Agreement with expression of quantity	9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16
3.	Agreement with some irregularities	17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24
4.	Agreement with nouns with no singular form	25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32
5.	Agreement with collective nouns	33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40
	Total	**40 items**

Before distributing the real test, the tryout test was given to see whether the test is valid and reliable or not. Moreover, tryout is used to see the difficulty level of each test item. According to Heaton (1975), the test will be accepted if the degree of difficulty is between 0.30-0.70 and will be rejected if the index of difficulty is below 0.30 (difficult) and over 0.70 (easy). After that, the writer computed the determination index, the mean score, the standard deviation, and the reliability of the test. If the test is reliable and can be used, then it will be given at the sample class. After that, it is analyzed according to the students' scores and their level of ability. The classification is such followed.

Classification of Students' Score

No.	Scores	Category
1.	80 – 100	Excellent
2.	60 – 79	Good
3.	50 – 59	Average
4.	0 – 49	Poor

(Adapted from Harris, 1974)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

The researcher presented the results of the test showing the students' ability in each aspect of agreements, they are: agreements with indefinite pronoun, agreements with expression of quantity, agreements with some irregularities, agreements with nouns with no singular form, and agreements with collective noun.

The Result of the Tryout

The researcher presented the result of the test showing the students' ability. Before the real test is given to the sample class, the tryout was given to the tryout class which consisted of 28 students of English Study Program FKIP Riau University from class B. After that, the writer computed the difficulty level, the determination index, the mean score, the standard deviation, and the reliability of the test.

The Difficulty Level of Test Items

By using the formula, there were found that 13 items number should be revised in order to test what should be tested: they are number 2, 4, 6, 9, 11, 13, 20, 22, 24, 33,

38, 39 and 40. Item number 4, 9, 20, 22, 24, 38, and 40 were revised because their index difficulty below 0.30 which meant that they were too difficult. Whereas, the item number 2, 6, 11, 13, 33, and 39 were revised because their index difficulty were above 0.70 which meant that they were too easy. Since the 13 items were rejected, the writer revised the test before it was distributed on the real test.

The Reliability of the Test

From the calculation of the data, it can be seen that the reliability of the test was 0.69. Tinambunan (1988) stated that if the test reached 0.41 − 0.70, it is reliable and categorized as high reliability. There were some steps that the writer used in order to find out the reliability of the test, as described below.

a) The mean score was reached by computing every student's correct answers. The way to get the mean score was the total scores of the students' correct answer were divided by the total number of the students. Based on the calculation on appendix 7, the total score of the students' answer is 548 from 28 students (the tryout respondents) from the calculation, the mean score is 19.57.

b) The mean score was used to get the standard deviation of the test which was processed in appendix 8. The standard deviation (SD) is 5.48.

c) The value of the mean and standard deviation were used in calculating the reliability of the test. The reliability of the test is 0.69 (high reliability).

The Analysis of Data

Individual Score

In order to find out the individual score of each student, the writer divided the number of the correct answers with the total number of items and then multiplied by one hundred (100). It is found that the mean score of the fourth semester students of English Study Program of FKIP University of Riau in using agreements is 56.1. Therefore, it is categorized is in average level. There are 26 students taking the test and 11 students (42.3%) are in good level, 8 students (30.8%) are in average level, and 7 students (26.9%) are in poor level. It is shown at the following chart.
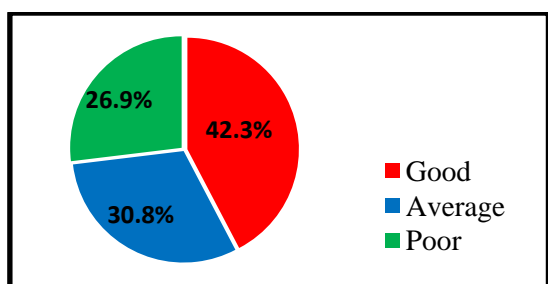
The Classification of the Students' Ability in using Agreements

After finding the students' individual scores in using agreements, the writer examined their ability based on the classifications of the questions as stated in the blueprint of the instrument. There are 5 types of agreements in this study, they are: agreement with indefinite pronoun, agreement with expression of quantity, agreement with some irregularities, agreement with noun with no singular form, and agreement with collective noun.

Students' Ability in Using Agreement with Indefinite Pronoun

The mean score of the students' scores in using agreement with indefinite pronoun is 67.3. Therefore, the students' ability is in good level. The highest number of the score gained by the students is 53.9% that 14 students are in good level. There are 5 students (19.2%) who are categorized as excellent level. Then, 4 students (15.4%) are in average level. The rest, only 3 students (11.5%) are in poor level.

Students' Ability in Using Agreement with Expression of Quantity

The result indicates that the mean score of the students' scores in using agreement with expression of quantity is 48.5. Therefore, the students' ability is in poor level. Considering the percentage, no one is in excellent level. Both the score of good level and average level are the same; that is 34.6% of students (each of it is 9 students). For the rest, 8 students (30.8%) are in poor level. Therefore, it can be inferred that most of students found that making the verb agrees with subject in term of expression of quantity was rather difficult for them.

Students' Ability in Using Agreement with Irregularities

The mean score of the students' scores in using agreement with irregularities is 50.9. Therefore, the students' ability is in average level. Considering the percentage, there are 10 students (38.4%) who are in poor level. Only 2 students (7.7%) are in excellent level. There are 8 students (30.8%) who are in good level of ability. And 6 students (23.1%) are in average level. It can be concluded that the students are categorized as in poor to average level. It indicates that some students could use the verb which agrees with irregularities as the subject correctly.

Students' Ability in Using Agreement with Nouns with No Singular Form

The mean score of the students' scores in using agreement with noun with no singular form is 67.7. Therefore, the students' score indicates that they are in good level of ability. Considering the percentage, there are 10 students (38.5%) who are in good level. Each of 6 students (23.1%) is in excellent level and average level of ability. And the rest, there are 4 students (15.3%) who are in the poor level of ability. Therefore, the students could get better use of this agreement with noun with no singular form. Yet some of the students found it fairly easy to be understood.

Students' Ability in Using Agreement with Collective Noun

The mean score of the students' scores in using agreement with collective noun is 45.6. Therefore, by using the students' score, the level of ability of the students is in poor level. Considering the percentage, there are 12 students (46.2%) who are in poor level. There are 2 students (7.7%) who are in excellent level. Then 8 students (30.8%) are in good level. And the rest is 15.3% of students (4 students) who are in average level of ability. In brief, students mostly found this agreement with collective noun was rather difficult. Since this material is also confusing the students.

DISCUSSION

The research findings showed that students got difficult in using agreements with expression of quantity and with collective noun. It is relevant to the research conducted by Murshidi (2014) who stated that subject-verb agreement of collective noun, subject-verb agreement of expression of quantity, and subject-verb agreement of irregularities are three of the most common errors made by the students in their writing with the repetition of errors up to 60%. Murshidi conducted research in studying the students' errors in agreements in their writing. Whereas, the writer used cloze procedure tests to see the errors made. And from this comparison, the writer could find any similarities and relevancies in the result or finding even though the instrument used to collect the data is different.

Moreover, the same research conducted by another researcher, Sutomo (2010) and the result showed that subject-verb agreement of expression of quantity reached the number of 3.23% among other agreements. The researcher found that several students did mistakes when using expression of quantity in creating a sentence in their writing. Therefore, the writer inferred that the writer's results have some relevancies with those two, but only with the different instrument used.

Murshidi moreover added that errors made by the students were commonly caused by several factors such as language transfer, transfer of training, strategies of the second language learning, strategies of the second language communication, affected by mother tongue, and lack of practice. It is quite similar to Stapa (2010) who stated that this error can be committed by the respondents are related to interlingual errors caused by interference of the learners' mother tongue.

Some suggestions are also recommended by Stapa (2010) such as students should be encouraged by completing quizzes and exercises available on English Grammar, students should be made aware of differences between their mother tongue's and English Grammar, hence they will not transfer L1 grammar to the L2.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

The objective of the study is to find out the ability of the fourth semester students in using agreements. After conducting the research, the writer reveals the conclusion that the students' ability in using agreements for five components or indicators is in average level of ability with the total mean score is 56. The lowest score is in poor level with the mean score 45.6 is in using agreement with collective noun. And the highest score with mean score 67.7 is in using agreement with noun with no singular form which categorized is in good level of ability. In short, the students' ability in using agreements at the fourth semester students of English Study Program of FKIP University of Riau needs to be increased by practicing a lot such as by completing quizzes or exercises and so on.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the research findings above, the writer would like to give some recommendations as follow:

1. For the students of English Study Program of FKIP University of Riau as the foreign learners should increase their achievement especially in agreements (concord). Especially for the fourth semester students of English Study Program of FKIP University of Riau who have been taught grammar in deep should be better in learning grammar especially for the material of concord/agreements. They should pay more attention while lecturer explaining the material. Considering its importance, it is necessary for students to do more practice and exercise, activate group discussion, etc.
2. For the lecturers of English Study Program of University of Riau especially those who teach structure and grammar had better give more explanation about this subject in deep, identify any errors made by the students, have them do more exercises and guide them to practice a lot. The purposes of those are to enable and ensure the students whether or not they have understood the material given.
3. For other interested researcher, if he/she found any weaknesses and inappropriateness in this study, some constructive correction is really needed. Therefore, further research will be better.

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