

# GRAMMATICAL DIFFICULTIES IN USING SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE IN PRESENTING SPOKEN EXPOSITION TEXT BY THE SECOND YEAR OF MAN 2 PADANG STUDENTS

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## Abstract

Simple present tense is one of language features of exposition text studied by senior high school students. However, there are still some difficulties faced by the students in using simple present tense in speaking. The aim of this research is to describe students' difficulties in using simple present tense in spoken exposition text. It was conducted at MAN 2 Padang in May-June 2017, with Grade XI of Science program students as the population and the total of 38 students as the sample of the research chosen by stratified random sampling method. The data of his research was in the form of transcript of students' speaking, obtained by speaking test. The result showed that there were grammatical difficulties in both verbal and nominal clauses using simple present tense. The most frequent difficulties in verbal clauses were subject-verb agreement (51%) and the use of auxiliary verb (18%). On the other hand, the most frequent difficulties in nominal clauses were no verb (71%) and no subject (13%). This research is expected to be a base for the next researches examining the grammatical difficulties in speaking of other senior high school students so the more significant result could be obtained to get the solution for this problem.

**Key words:** *Grammatical difficulty, Speaking, Exposition text*

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## Introduction

In *Kurikulum 2013 SMA/MA*, students study some monolog texts; one of them is exposition text. Exposition text is used to present a logical argument from a particular point of view. It involves comparing opposite point of view, analyzing the arguments, and concluding with an overriding opinion or conclusive argument. The communicative purpose of exposition text is to prove the validity of an idea or point of view, by presenting sound reasoning, discussion, and argument that thoroughly convince the reader; or to persuade the readers or listeners that something is the case, to analyze, or to explain (Dirgeyasa, 2016, p. 117-118). The text structures of exposition text begin with a topic, arguments, and then concluding sentences. In exposition text, there are some language features that need to be used. One of them is the use of simple present tense.

In studying the texts, students should meet some *Kompetensi dasar* (basic competence) in the curriculum. First, the students should be able to understand the purpose, the text structure, and the language features of the text. Second, the students should understand both written and spoken form of the text and be able to create the text, both in its written and spoken form by paying attention to its purpose and text structure and by using the language features of the text. It is showed that speaking skill is included in the curriculum. Hence, following the basic competence, students are expected to be able to use the language features of the text, one of which is simple present tense, in their spoken exposition text.

In order to speak well, there are three components of speaking that should be studied. They are vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. In fact, Bygates says in Zeind, Vega, & Gallegos that "grammatical, pronunciation, and vocabulary knowledge of the language are required in oral production" (2010, p. 593). Grammar is included as the component of speaking because it enables people to construct sentences. By knowing how to build and use certain structures, makes it possible to communicate more successfully (Swan, in Richards & Renadya, 2002, p. 151). Thus, grammar is needed even in speaking skill.

However, applying grammar in speaking or spoken form of the text is not easy for senior high school students. Based on the result of informal interviews with some English teachers at MAN 2 Padang, it is found that generally, while presenting spoken text, many students often use wrong vocabulary and do not even know how to say something in English. Consequently, they use *Bahasa Indonesia* vocabulary instead. The teachers also mentioned that most students have problem in making English sentences. Sometimes, some of them arrange the words in their sentence reversely, or they have wrong word orders. Then, they often use many fillers as they are thinking about what to say. It is caused by either that they do not know the grammar rule or they know the rule but hindered because they do not know the English vocabulary. In short, the students have problem in grammar while speaking.

These problems should be solved as soon as possible and should be prevented to occur in the future. If these problems go on, it will bring disadvantages for the students. For instance, it may reduce the quality of students speaking and affect their performance inside or outside the classroom. Thus, it is necessary to find out the students' grammatical difficulties in presenting spoken exposition text in order to know what difficulties faced by the students related to the grammatical features of exposition text; one of them is simple present tense.

This research is expected to be the base for other researches on grammatical difficulties in speaking English to get a more significant result. If it turns out that grammatical difficulties in speaking is also found in high school students of other schools, further research on this should be done to provide a solution of this problem in order to make learning speaking of English as a foreign language can be more successful.

## Method

This research is a descriptive research which aimed to describe the students' grammatical difficulties in presenting spoken exposition text. According to Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2007, p. 205), descriptive methods set out to describe and to interpret. It is not aimed to test a certain hypothesis, but sets out to make a careful description of educational phenomena (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003, p. 290).

The data was gathered by using two instruments: speaking test and recording. A speaking test used in this research was a test in which the students were asked to give their arguments about an article. There were 6 articles that had been prepared, taken from Teen Vogue online magazine Volume 3, 2017. The students were asked to read and understand the article then to give their arguments about it. They were being recorded while presenting their speaking. After that, the transcript was made.

The data was analyzed through the following steps. First, all clauses using simple present tense were listed down. Then they were marked as (+) if the clause was correct and (-) if the clause was wrong. Also they were noted as verbal (V) or nominal (N). After that, the description of the mistakes was given. The analysis was done per clause by referring to the theory of simple present tense as the indicator.

## Result and Discussion

### Research Finding

The findings were determined on the basis of one of grammatical features of exposition text: simple present tense. The difficulties were sought from two kinds of clauses: verbal and nominal. The finding shows that there were several grammatical difficulties done by the students in using simple present tense both in verbal and nominal clauses. As shown in the following chart:

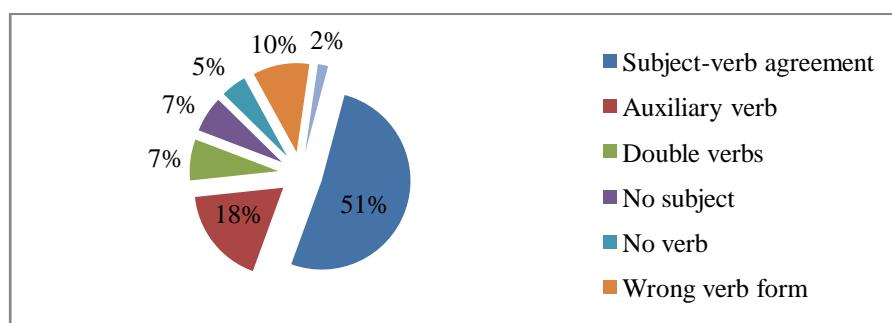


Figure 1. The difficulties in verbal clauses

In using verbal clauses of simple present tense, there were some difficulties identified. As shown in chart 1, the difficulties that appeared in verbal clauses were subject-verb agreement, sequentially followed by auxiliary verb, wrong verb form, double verbs, no subject, no verb, and wrong word order.

From chart 1, it could be seen that the most frequent difficulties of verbal clause using simple present tense were subject-verb agreement (51%) and auxiliary verb (18%). In subject-verb agreement, most students did not use -s form of the verb while the subject was third-singular person even though the subject should agree in number with the verb: singular subject takes the -s form of the verb, and plural subject takes the simple form of the verb. In auxiliary verb, the students either did not use auxiliary verb in negative clause or passive voice clause or used wrong auxiliary verb in their clauses.

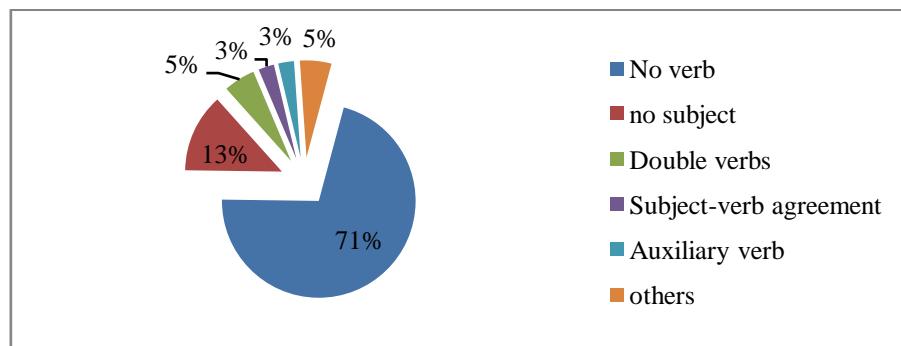


Figure 2. The difficulties in nominal clauses

In using nominal clauses of simple present tense, there were some difficulties identified. As shown in chart 2, the difficulties that appeared in nominal clauses were no verb, sequentially followed by no subject, double verbs, subject-verb agreement, auxiliary verb, and others.

From chart 2, it could be seen that the most frequent difficulties of nominal clause using simple present tense were no verb (71%) and no subject (13%). In nominal clause, *to be* (am, is, are) acts as the verb of a clause. However, there were many clauses that did not have verb. Whereas, verb is a necessary element of a clause. A nominal clause also requires a subject. However, there were some nominal clauses that had no subject.

## Discussion

Based on the findings, there were many grammatical mistakes about simple present tense in students' speaking, indicating that the students had grammatical difficulties in presenting spoken exposition text. This implied that students still have problem understanding the language features of the text and to use it in speaking skill. This finding is in line with a research done by Fuadi (2013) whose result showed that students got problem in grammar in speaking. This research also showed that students still have problem in grammar but in more detail categories; that there was grammatical difficulties in using simple present tense in presenting spoken exposition text. Grammar has been one of component of speaking that became obstacle for students in speaking English, especially for students in Indonesia where English is studied as a foreign language. Most students still could not apply grammar rule in speaking English even though they have studied about it.

Moreover, the findings showed that the most frequent mistake in using simple present tense was about subject-verb agreement. There was 51% mistakes about subject-verb agreement found in this research with the most mistakes are related to the omission of suffix -s in the verb with singular subject. This result is relevant with the research conducted by Susanto (2016) whose result showed that the most error in subject-verb agreement was omission. A research by Tarawneh and Almimani (2013) that analyzed ungrammatical sentences in a conversation class also showed that there were grammatical errors and mistakes about subject-verb agreement as a result of L1 interference, overgeneralization, lack of competence, and carelessness.

In *Bahasa Indonesia*, the verb does not change form even if the subject is singular or plural. In other words, there is no subject-verb agreement in *Bahasa Indonesia*. For example, in *Bahasa Indonesia* the verb stay the same no matter what the subject is. However in English, as stated by Warriner (2008, p. 148) that the number of a verb should agree with the number of its subject. Singular verbs should be used for singular subjects, and plural verbs should be used for plural subjects. Thus, in English, the verb "go" will need suffix -s for third-person singular subject and become "goes". However, most clauses in the transcript did not have

correct subject-verb agreement. Most of them did not use -s form of the verb for singular subject, instead they just used the basic form of the verb. This is probably happened due to the interference of mother tongue or the differences between verb in English and *Bahasa Indonesia*.

The grammatical difficulties in using simple present tense indicated that simple present tense was still difficult to be understood by the students. This was in line with the research result done by Achriani (2011) that aimed to describe the error in using present tenses and found what tense is mostly used wrongly. The result showed that simple present is the second tense with most error indicating that simple present tense is the second most difficult present tenses. However, a research conducted by Lestari (2013) that analyze the error in the use of simple present tense showed different result. The result of her research showed that the students have fair ability in mastering simple present tense, with the kinds of error found was omission.

The difference of mother tongue and target language can affect the production of the target language. Arif (2015) studied about mother-tongue interference in the error of learners' grammar. The study showed that the greater the grammatical differences between mother tongue and target language (foreign language), the greater the difficulty faced by learners. In addition, Beardsmore in Kalaiselvan (2012, p. 57) mentions that many difficulties with phonology, vocabulary and grammar of target language are due to the interference of habits from first language. The formal elements of the first language are used within the context of target language, resulting in errors in target language, as the structures of the languages, the first and second languages are different.

## Conclusion and Suggestions

There were students' grammatical difficulties in using simple present tense in presenting spoken exposition text. In making verbal clauses using simple present tense, the students had difficulties with subject-verb agreement (51%), and in the use of auxiliary verb (18%). On the other hand, in making nominal clauses using simple present tense, the students have difficulties in using verb (no verb) (71%) and subject (13%).

Some suggestions were as follows. It is necessary for the English teachers in high school to know what factors hinder their students from speaking English, especially in grammar. It is advisable for English teachers to develop their teaching method, especially in speaking and grammar so that it can improve students' understanding about speaking and grammar skill. This can help the students to be better speakers. It is suggested for other researchers to conduct research on grammatical difficulties in speaking in order to get more significant result that can be used for improving teaching method of English as a foreign language.

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