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ANALYZING EFL STUDENTS' ABILITY IN IDENTIFYING PASSIVE VOICE

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Abstract

Mastering passive voice is essential for students in comprehending reading texts which commonly found in report, explanation, and hortatory texts. However, based on the preliminary study, the first and second year students of English Language Education Study Program still encounter difficulties in differentiating passive voice and active voice in text. Thus, this study focuses on analyzing the ability in identifying passive voice of the fourth semester students of English Language Education Study Program in Lambung Mangkurat University. This study employed a quantitative approach involving 77 students from three Intermediate Grammar classes. To collect the data, a test was utilized requiring the students to complete within 45 minutes through Google Form. From the analysis, it was found that the ability of the fourth semester students in identifying passive voice in explanation texts was fair. In general, the majority of the students could identify passive voice from the reading texts correctly. However, they encountered difficulties when they were asked to transform the active sentences to passive sentences. The result also indicated that the students' main problem in changing active sentences to passive sentences was related to their lack of understanding in constructing passive voice. These findings imply a need to employ Contextual Teaching and Learning as an approach in teaching passive voice.

Keywords: *ability; passive voice; reading text*

INTRODUCTION

Grammar is the important part of languages. It is one of the elements that should be mastered. Grammar constitutes of conventions that one should follow in forming words and sentences (Manser, 1991). Mastering grammar enables students to form clear and good sentences. Therefore, grammar is one of the important language components in learning English.

Passive voice is a significant part of English grammar that students have to master in order to be able to communicate both oral and written. Passive voice is a grammatical construction which the subject as receiver of action by the doer of action (Kadarmo and Kasmini, 2015). In passive voices, the process is more important than the doers (Furqaidah, Rohmah and Widiati, 2018). It is concluded that the subject in passive voice is received an action.

Passive voice is often found in reading a passage showing that the action is more important than the doer. Passive voice mastery is useful for the students in reading text which commonly formed in report, explanation, and hortatory texts because the verbs/actions/processes are important to be emphasized than the subjects (doers). Hence, it is essential that students master the passive voice to understand the contents of these texts.

Passive voice is used in technical journal, reports, and newspapers (Frank, 1972). Furthermore, passive is very common in scientific writings (Swan, 1980). In the teaching and learning process, especially in reading courses in university levels, teachers usually use scientific writings. Therefore, students should be able to identify passive sentence to understand the texts.

However, identifying passive voice is challenging for Indonesian students. The problems they usually faced in mastering passive voice are dealing with identifying the indicators of passive voice in the text (Elmadwi, 2015). This means that the students are not able to distinguish between be as a primary auxiliary and as a passive auxiliary (Amadi, 2018). Another reason is the interference of their mother tongue, that is *Bahasa Indonesia* (Hastuti and Widodo, 2011).

Based on a preliminary study in the English Language Education Study Program of Universitas Lambung Mangkurat, the first and second year students faced difficulties in distinguishing passive and active voice. Hence, the focus of this research is to analyze students' ability in identifying passive voice in explanation texts. The reason of using explanation texts is because this type of text contains passive voice in their language feature and used as the teaching and learning material at Intermediate Grammar course in the institution.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ability

Ability is the capacity of an individual to perform various tasks in a job (Judge and Robbins, 2009). Ability is the skill or power to do something in other words talent. Ability is a change in energy in a person that takes into account thoughts and is preceded by a response to a goal (Sadirman, 2009). It means that people have the potential to do something. In fact, one's ability may be influenced by some factors. It is also true with the ability in identifying passive sentences. Some factors that affect students' ability in identifying passive voice are coming from the internal factors and the external factors. The influential internal factors are motivation, adequate time, attitudes, and intelligence. Meanwhile, the external factors include teachers, parents, peers, and environment (Yulia, 2009).

Passive Voice

Passive voice is a sentence that the original receiver becomes the subject and the original doer of the action becomes the object of the preposition by Kadarmo and Kasmini, (2015). In other words, passive voice is used when the action is more important than the doer. Passive sentence emphasizes on event rather than the subject.

Moreover, there are several steps to change active sentence become passive sentence (Yulianto, 2017):

- 1) Move the object of the active sentence to the subject of passive sentence.
- 2) If there are auxiliaries verb (is, am, are, was, were) in the active sentence, move the "to be" to the back of the subject sentence and adjust it to the subject.
- 3) The verb used in all kinds of passive sentences is past participle.
- 4) All verbs in the third verb form in passive sentence must be preceded by "to be" which is adjusted to the form of the active sentence.
- 5) Add "by" after the third form sentence except if the purpose of the sentence is clear.
- 6) Move the subject of active sentence to the object in passive sentence.

Explanation Text

Explanations are written to explain how something works or occurs. The process of the events is explained sequentially and with the time related information (PDTS, 2017). Furthermore, the structure of an explanation text includes general statement which introduces the topic or process being explained, sequenced explanation on how something works or occurs, and a conclusion which provides a final explanation (Hartono, 2005).

The features of an explanation text may include non-human participants, cause and effect relationships, passives and timeless present tense (Sadirman, 2009). Non-human participants mean that the main subject of text is usually a noun. This text is explaining about the process or the occurrence of something works, where automatically only a noun that can be described. There are six language features in explanation texts, namely (Hartono, 2005):

- 1) General noun which includes nouns that are commonly used for communication, e.g. bee, food, honey, etc.
- 2) Action verbs which describe actions that can be seen e.g. drink, make, fall, cover, etc.
- 3) Simple present tense that is used for events or situations that always happen, habitual actions, and facts (Azar, 1993).
- 4) Passive voice that concerns more on the events (what happen) not the subject. It is determined by the use of the "by- phrase".
- 5) Conjunction of time and cause-effect relationship that may include first, then, after, next, finally, because, since, as, because of, due to, so, etc.
- 6) Technical terms are used to make the sentences sound more scientific.

To conclude, explanation texts have certain language features and one of them is passive voice.

METHOD

The design of this research is a descriptive quantitative research. The aim of this study is to describe the ability of the fourth semester students of English Language Education Program Students in identifying passive voice in explanation texts. The subjects of the study were the students who were in the Intermediate Grammar course at Lambung Mangkurat University in the academic year of 2020/2021. The total subjects were 83 students.

This research employed a test to measure students' ability in identifying passive voice in explanation texts. Before administering the test, the researchers validated the instrument by using expert judgement. The test consists of three parts, including identifying passive sentences from the texts by putting check mark, identifying passive sentences from the texts by writing down the sentences, and changing the active sentences found in the texts into passive sentences. The total score of the test was 100.

Furthermore, in analyzing the data, the researchers used the following steps:

- 1) Calculating the students' scores.
- 2) Calculating the mean score.
- 3) Classifying the scores based on Table 1 (Susanto, 2011).
- 4) Calculating the percentage of the classification of the students' ability (Sudijono, 2011)

Table 1. The Classification of Level Proficiency

96-100	Excellent
86-95	Very Good
75-85	Good
66-74	Fairly Good
56-65	Fair
36-55	Poor
0-35	Very Poor

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to describe the ability of the fourth semester students of English Language Education Program Students in identifying passive voice in explanation texts. A total of 83 students from three Intermediate Grammar classes were taken as the subjects of this research. However, there were only 77 students who

completed the test. The students' works were then analyzed to find their ability in identifying passive voice in explanation texts.

Results

After obtaining the data through the test, the researchers counted and tabulated the scores of the students. The scores were then classified into seven levels of proficiency as displayed on Table 2. The mean score was also calculated resulting in 57.51. It can be concluded that the students' ability in identifying passive voice in explanation texts was fair.

Table 2. Results of the Test

Score Range	Classification	Number of Students	
		f	%
96-100	Excellent	1	1.3
86-95	Very Good	8	10.39
75-85	Good	11	14.29
66-74	Fairly Good	8	10.39
56-65	Fair	14	18.18
36-55	Poor	23	29.87
0-35	Very Poor	12	15.58
	Total	77	100.0
	Mean	57.51	

Moreover, the results of the test were analyzed based on each part of the test. The first part is identifying passive sentences by providing a mark on the answer sheet. The data was summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of the First Part of the Test

Correct Answer	Score	Number of Students	
		f	%
10	30	5	6.49
9	27	12	15.58
8	24	13	16.88
7	21	12	15.58
6	18	14	18.18
5	15	5	6.49
4	12	7	9.09
3	9	6	7.79
2	6	2	2.60
1	3	1	1.30
	Total	77	100.0

Table 3 showed that more than half of the students or 56 students (72.73%) could identify more than five passive sentences from three explanation texts given. There

were 14 students (18.18%) who correctly identified 6 passive sentences, 12 students (15.58%) who correctly identified 7 passive sentences, 13 students (16.88%) who correctly identified 8 passive sentences, and 12 students (15.58%) who correctly identified 9 passive sentences. In addition, there were even 5 students (6.49%) who correctly identified all passive sentences from the texts. However, the rest of the students or 21 students (27.23%) could only identify 1 to 5 passive sentences correctly. There were 5 students (6.49%) who correctly identified 5 passive sentences, 7 students (9.09%) who correctly identified 4 passive sentences, 6 students (7.79%) who correctly identified 3 passive sentences, 2 students (2.60%) who correctly identified 2 passive sentences, and one student (1.30%) who identified only 1 passive sentence from the texts.

The second part of the test was identifying passive voice by writing down the passive sentences. In the second part of the test, the students were asked to identify five passive sentences and write them down. There were five passive sentences from an explanation text that should be identified by the students. Each correct answer was given score four. Thus, the maximum score of the second part was 20. The data was summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of the Second Part of the Test

Correct Students Answer	Score	Number of f %	
5	20	19	24.68
4	16	18	23.38
3	12	13	16.88
2	8	9	11.69
1	4	16	20.78
0	0	2	2.60
Total	77	100.0	

From the data displayed on Table 4, it could be seen that there 19 students (24.68%) who correctly identified and wrote down all five passive sentences from the explanation text given. In addition, there were 18 students (23.38%) who correctly identified and wrote down 4 passive sentences, 13 students (16.88%) who correctly identified and wrote down 3 passive sentences, and 9 students (11.69%) who correctly identified and wrote down 2 passive sentences. However, there were 16 students (20.78%) who could only identified and wrote down 1 passive sentence correctly. There were also 2 students (2.60%) who could not identify any passive sentences from the text or wrote down the passive sentences.

The third part of the test was changing active sentences given into passive sentences. In the third part of the test, the students were asked to change five active sentences into passive sentences. There were five active sentences chosen from two explanation texts that should be changed by the students. The maximum score of the

third part was 50. Moreover, each correct answer was given score 0 to 10 depended on the errors made. For instance, if the students omitted the present form of "to be" required (is, am, are), used singular or plural form incorrectly, or used the past form instead (was, were) they would get a score of 5. However, if the students arranged the passive sentences incorrectly or did not write down their answer they would get a score of 0. The data was summarized in Table 5.

Table 5 showed that there were only 6 students (7.79%) who correctly changed all five active sentences found on the texts into passive sentences. There were also 27 students (35.07%) whose score were 30 - 45. It meant they could change three to four active sentences into passive sentences correctly. In addition, there were 36 students (46.75%) whose score were 25 - 5. It meant they could only change one to two active sentences into passive sentences correctly. Moreover, there were 8 students (10.39%) who incorrectly changed all active sentences into passive sentences or did not write down their answers.

Table 5. Results of the Third Part of the Test

Score	Number of Students	
	f	%
50	6	7.79
45	5	6.49
40	10	12.99
35	3	3.90
30	9	11.69
25	10	12.99
20	14	18.18
15	5	6.49
10	2	2.60
5	5	6.49
0	8	10.39
Total	77	100.0

Based on the results, it can be concluded that the first part of the test was the easiest part since most of the students could identify more than 5 passive sentences correctly. Meanwhile, the hardest part for the students was the third part of the test. From the scores of third part, it was found that many students faced difficulties in changing active sentences into passive sentences. Some students omitted the "to be" is and are from their sentences. There were also some students who used past form of "to be" was and were instead.

Discussions

Identifying passive voice in explanation text was not an easy task for some students, even for the fourth semester students of English Language Education Study Program. The mean score obtained from the test was 57.51. This result indicated that the ability of the fourth semester students of English Language Education Study Program in identifying passive voice in explanation texts

was fair.

However, in general, many students got good scores in the first and second parts of the test where they were only asked to identify passive sentences from the explanation texts given. As can be seen from the results, more than half of the students could identify more than five passive sentences from three explanation texts given correctly. Similar results could also be seen from the scores of the second part of the test. In the second part of the test, more than half of the students could identify and wrote down three and more passive sentences from the explanation texts given correctly. From the results of the test, it could be concluded that the students' main problem was when they were asked to change the active sentences into passive sentences.

Furthermore, in changing active sentences into passive sentences, many students used "to be" incorrectly in their sentences. The use of to be / auxiliary verb was one of main difficulties faced by the students in changing active sentences to passive sentences (Oktaviani, 2020). Many of the students omitted the present form of "to be" required (is, are). For example, the sentence was "Honeybees use nectar to make honey." One of the students wrote down "Nectar used by honeybees to make honey" instead of "Nectar is used by honeybees to make honey". Another example was for the sentence "The cacao tree produces a fruit about the size of a small pine apple." One of the students wrote down "A fruit about the size of a small pine apple produced by the cacao tree" instead of "A fruit about the size of a small pine apple is produced by the cacao tree."

Moreover, some students used the past form of to be (was, were) even though the sentences were in present tense. This problem occurred because the students have not yet fully mastered the tenses (Oktaviani, 2020). For example, the sentence was "After that, the farmers ship the dried beans to the chocolate maker." One of the students wrote down "After that, the dried beans were shipped by the farmers to the chocolate maker" instead of "After that, the dried beans are shipped by the farmers to the chocolate maker." Another example was for the sentence "Then the chocolate maker sorts and blends the beans to produce a distinctive mix." One of the students wrote down "Then the beans were sorted and blended by the chocolate maker to produce a distinctive mix" instead of "Then the beans are sorted and blended by the chocolate maker to produce a distinctive mix."

In addition, a few students used singular and plural form of "to be" incorrectly. For example, the sentence was "Honeybees use nectar to make honey." One of the students wrote down "Nectar are used by honeybees to make honey" instead of "Nectar is used by honeybees to make honey". Another example was for the sentence "After that, the farmers ship the dried beans to the chocolate maker." One of the students wrote down "After that, the dried beans is shipped by the farmers to the chocolate maker" instead of "After that, the dried beans are shipped by the farmers to the chocolate maker." One of the main grammatical problems faced by students in constructing passive sentences was related to the agreement of subject and auxiliary "to be" (Fitrawati, Syarif and Yunita, 2017).

Another reason why the students found it difficult to change active sentences to passive sentence was because they could not construct passive sentences correctly. For example, one of the students wrote "Honey is made use nectar by honeybees." More

evidences could be found from these sentences: "After that, the farmers is shipped the dried beans to the chocolate maker" and "Then the chocolate maker are sorted and blended the beans to produce a distinctive mix."

Therefore, from the discussions it could be concluded that the majority of the students could identify passive voice from the reading texts. However, they faced difficulties when they were asked to change the active sentences to passive sentences because they have not mastered the rules in constructing passive voice. One of the factors that influenced the students' ability in identifying passive voice in reading text was that some of them did not master the tenses well (Aprilia, 2011).

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Based on the result of the data analysis, it can be concluded that the ability of the fourth semester students of English Language Education Study Program in the academic year of 2019/2020 in identifying passive voice in explanation texts is fair. In general, the majority of the students can identify passive voice from the reading texts correctly. However, they face difficulties when they are asked to change the active sentences to passive sentences. The result also indicates that the students' main problem in changing active sentences to passive sentences is related to their lack of understanding in constructing passive voice.

Suggestions

By revisiting the analysis result of this study, the researcher offers some suggestions. The students are suggested to improve their understanding in constructing passive voice by completing tasks related to passive voice, for examples grammar exercise drill and writing task. In addition, Contextual Teaching and Learning is suggested as an approach used in teaching passive voice. Moreover, it is suggested for the future researchers to investigate the use of Contextual Teaching and Learning in teaching passive voice.

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