AN ANALYSIS OF THE THIRD YEAR STUDENTS’ PROBLEMS IN UNDERSTANDING PAST PERFECT TENSE AT ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF BUNG HATTA UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

The objective of this research was to know the problems of the third year student at English Department of Bung Hatta University in understanding past perfect tense. The design of this research was descriptive. The population of this research was the third year at English Department students of Bung Hatta University in academic year 2015/2016. The total number of the population member was 46. The data were gathered by grammar test in the form of multiple choice given to the students. The researcher limited his research in understanding past perfect tense in using affirmative, negative and interrogative form. The researcher described the problems found by the students in answering the questions. From the result of the research, the researcher found out 65% students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in academic year 2015/2016 had problem in understanding past perfect tense. The researcher also found 35% students had no problem. Based on the result above the teachers are suggested to give more contextual examples and explanation about past perfect tense. So, the students are going to be familiar with past perfect tense and are going to practice past perfect tense in daily activity too. The students are suggested to do lot of practice to increase understanding past perfect tense. And to the next researcher, it is suggested to study about some factors that cause the students’ problems in understanding past perfect tense such as differentiate between past perfect tense and past tense.

Key words: problem, past perfect tense, affirmative form, negative form, interrogative form

Introduction

English is important to be learned in various fields, such as economic, social, education and others. In economic affair, people need English in order to make their business runs well. For example; English is needed for export and import business. English is also used for social life such as traveling abroad and direction in public places. For education, English is studied in all majors and levels, especially in formal education.

In Indonesia, English has been taught to students from junior high school up to university level. In junior high school and senior high school, students are taught to write a simple sentence and to speak in short conversation in English. In other words,
students also learn four language skills. They are listening, speaking, reading and writing. In addition, students also study language components. They are vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation.

Most of the students think that learning English is a problem. Sofa in Kurniawan (2012) states that the sources of the students’ problem in learning English are the lack of motivation, negative attitude towards English, being introvert and lack of perseverance. Furthermore, they cannot speak English fluently; they are confused about using appropriate tenses when they have to write sentences or paragraph or to analyze the kind of tenses used in the paragraph.

In grammar, there are several tenses such as simple present, simple past tense, present perfect, past perfect, future perfect, present continuous, past continuous, etc. Each tense has different function. For example, if the student want to express an action that already happened before a specific time or another action in the past.

Side and Wellman (2000:17) say that we use past perfect to talk about an action that already happened before a specific time or another action in the past. Swan and Walter (2001:51) say that when we are already talked about the past, we use the past perfect to talk about an earlier time.

The students often make the sentences in the form of present perfect tense. Actually, they are asked to make simple sentences using past perfect tense. For examples:

1. I have read the book.
2. He has left

It was the wrong sentence and the correct sentence were:

1. I had read the book
2. He had left

Based on the researcher’s survey to the third year students, many students did not understand past perfect tense well. Problem appeared when students were asked to make sentences or analyze sentences. Beside that there was an interview that had been done by researcher. From interview, some students said that they have problem to write simple sentences especially in past perfect tense. They were confused to use appropriate tense, verb, adverbs of time and conjunction.

Based on the above explanation above, the researcher was interested in conducting a research about an analysis of the third year students’ problem in understanding past perfect tense at English Department of Bung Hatta university.
This research aimed generally at describing the problem faced by the students in understanding past perfect tense. The specific purposes were: to find out whether the third year students have problem in understanding affirmative form in past perfect tense or not, to find out whether the third year students have problem in understanding negative form in past perfect tense or not, to find out whether the third year students have problem in understanding interrogative form of in past perfect tense or not.

This research is very important for the students, the lectures and the researcher. For lectures, it gives description of students about problems in studying past perfect tense so that the lectures can develop the best way to solve the problems. For the students, they can realize the sources of their problems such as to write affirmative form, negative form and interrogative form in understanding grammar, especially past perfect tense. For the researcher, it will give additional knowledge and experience in conducting this research.

**Research Design**

Descriptive method was used as the design of this research. Gay (1987:189) states descriptive method involves collecting data in order to answer question concerning the current status of subject of the study. He also adds the descriptive method determines and reports the way things are. It means that the descriptive method does not control subjects being studied. It measures what has been already exist of the subject.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher concludes that descriptive method had given facts or real information about the sample of the study without manipulation or treatment. Therefore, this research just described the problems of the third year students in understanding past perfect tense at English Department of Bung Hatta University.

According to Gay (1987:102), population is a group which the researcher would like the result of the study to be generalized. The population of this research was the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University Academic Year 2015/2016. The number of population member was 46 students. Here is the distribution of the population shown in the Table 1 below.

| Table 1 |
The population of the Third Year Students at English Department of Bung Hatta University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

3
Gay (1987:101) explains that sampling is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in a way that individuals represent the larger group from which they were selected and sample is a small part of the population. Gay (1987:103) also adds a sample is representative of the population from which is selected.

The selection of the sample was conducted through a sampling technique. The researcher used cluster random sampling as sampling technique. Cluster random sampling is one of the sampling techniques in which groups, not individual, are randomly selected (Gay, 1987:110). It was used because of some reasons. First, the population was distributed in groups or classes and all of populations have the same chance to be selected as sample in this research. Second, the students in two classes had the same curriculum, teaching material, and allocation of time. The last, it was difficult to gather them on the same occasion.

In selecting the sample, the researcher prepared two piece of paper. Then, he wrote class A in the first piece, and class B in the second piece. Then, the papers were rolled, and they were put into the box. Next, the researcher shook them. The last, he took one piece of the paper. The first paper taken was class A for try out, and the second paper taken was class B for real test. The total number of class A is about 26 students. In addition, the total number of class B was 20 students. It means 44% became the sample.

Grammar test in the form of multiple choices was used in this research to collect the data. Brown and Abeywikrama (2010:295) state multiple choice is the most common and popular task for the test-takers because it is easy to administer and to give score.

The total of item is 60 items which are divided into three parts. They are affirmative, negative, and interrogative form. There were 20 items using affirmative form, 20 items using negative form and 20 items using interrogative form. The researcher gave the students time about 60 minutes to do the test because it was estimated enough to do the multiple choice test with 60 items. Then for real test the
researcher gave 45 items and gave the students time about 45 minutes.

Before the giving the real test the researcher did the try out test. The purposed as to know whether the students understand the instruction of the test, the time affectivity to do test is enough or not and to identify the validity and reliability of the test. The result of try out test was used to analyze item difficulties, item discrimination.

A test is used as instrument must be valid and reliable. A test is valid if the test measures what it is supposed to measure (Arikunto 2012: 80). One of types of test validity is content validity. The researcher used content validity. The researcher used the content validity because suitable with syllabus, and student’s lesson in past perfect tense.

Reliability is the degree to which a test consistently measures whatever it measures (Gay, 1987:135). Reliability indicates that instrument is used as means of collecting data. The researcher used split half method. According to Gay (1987:138), split half method refers to a form of internal consistency reliability and this method requires the test to be divided into two groups. The researcher calculated the coefficient of correlation of the odd items and even items by using Pearson Product Moment formula as suggested by Arikunto (2012:87) as follows:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{N \sum XY - (\sum X)(\sum Y)}{\sqrt{[N \sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2][N \sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2]}}$$

Where:

- $r_{xy}$ = The coefficient variable of $x$ and $y$ (first half and second half items)
- $n$ = The number of the students who follows the test
- $\sum x$ = The sum of scores of the odd test items
- $\sum y$ = The sum of scores of the even test items

Furthermore, the result analyzed by using Spearman Brown formula (Gay, 1987:139) as follows:

$$r_{li} = \frac{2r_{xy}}{1 + r_{xy}}$$

Where:

- $r_{li}$ = The reliability coefficient of the total test
- $r_{xy}$ = The coefficient of the odd and even items

The researcher used the degree of correlation coefficient based on Arikunto’s idea (2012:89):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.81 – 1.00</td>
<td>Very high correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.61 – 0.80</td>
<td>High correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.41 – 0.60</td>
<td>Enough correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.21 – 0.40</td>
<td>Low correlation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
0.00 – 0.20 = Very low correlation

As the result of try out test the researcher found that the degree of correlation reliability coefficient was .96. It means that the test was significanct and categorized in very high correlation. It could be concluded that the test was reliable and could be used in gathering the data.

To find out the item difficulties and item discrimination, According to Arikunto (2012:22), a good test is not too easy and not too difficult. The researcher used the formula proposed by Arikunto (2012:223) as follows:

\[ P = \frac{B}{JS} \]

Where:
- \( P \) = Item difficulties
- \( B \) = The total number of the students who gets correct answer in each item
- \( JS \) = The total number of students who follows the test

The item difficulties range between 0.00 – 1.00 and it is symbolized as “P” that refers to “proportion” in the evaluation term. According to Arikunto (2012:225), index for item difficulty is as follows:
- \( P > 0.00 – 0.30 \) = Difficult
- \( P > 0.31 – 0.70 \) = Moderate
- \( P > 0.71 – 1.00 \) = Easy

The item discrimination is a test measurement which separates the student into high and low groups. To determine item discrimination, the researcher used the formula as stated by Arikunto (2012:228) as follows:

\[ D = \frac{B_A - B_B}{J_A - J_B} \]

Where:
- \( D \) = The discrimination
- \( B_A \) = The number of high group students who answers the item correctly
- \( B_B \) = The number of low group students who answers the item correctly
- \( J_A \) = The number of high group students
- \( J_B \) = The number of low group students

Arikunto (2012:232) suggests the classification of the item discrimination as the following:
- \( D = 0.00 – 0.19 \) = Poor
- \( D = 0.20 – 0.39 \) = Satisfactory
- \( D = 0.40 – 0.69 \) = Good
- \( D = 0.70 – 1.00 \) = Excellent

According to Arikunto (2012:232), a good test item is an item which has difficulty in the range 0.30-0.70, and the discrimination in the range of 0.40-0.70. However, that items in the range 0.29 or 0.71 for item difficulty and the item discrimination can be modified. Based on the result of data analysis, the researcher got
45 items (1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 45, 46, 47, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 55, 56, 57, 59) as accepted items, and 15 items were discarded (2, 4, 8, 13, 17, 22, 24, 29, 30, 34, 38, 44, 48, 54, 58).

The data of this research are the students’ scores in past perfect tense. They were gathered through the use of grammar test in multiple choice form. The researcher gathered the data based on the steps followed:
1. The researcher gave the test to the students.
2. The researcher explained the instruction of the test to the students.
3. The researcher asked the students to do the test in 45 minutes.
4. The researcher collected the students’ answer sheet.
5. The researcher checked out the students’ answers.

The researcher gave 1 point for the correct answer and 0 for wrong answer.

To analyze the data the researcher used descriptive analysis. The researcher
1. The researcher presented the raw score of each sample.
2. The researcher calculated Mean (M) by using formula suggested by Arikunto (2012:299):
   \[ M = \frac{\sum x}{N} \]
   Where:
   \( M \) = Mean
   \( \sum x \) = The total number
   \( N \) = Number of students
3. The researcher calculated Standard Deviation (SD) by using formula suggested by Arikunto (2012: 299):
   \[ SD = \sqrt{\frac{\sum x^2}{N} - \left( \frac{\sum x}{N} \right)^2} \]
   Where:
   \( SD \) = Standard Deviation
   \( \sum x \) = The total number
   \( \sum x^2 \) = The total of \( x^2 \)
   \( N \) = Number of students
4. The researcher classified the students’ score based on Nasoetion’s idea in Kurniawan (2012) below:
   Having no problem at all > M+ 1.5 SD
   Having no problem = M+ 0.5 SD - <M+ 1.5 SD
   Having small problem = M – 0.5 SD - <M +0.5 SD
   Having problem = M – 1.5 SD- < M- 0.5 SD
   Having big problem < M – 1.5 SD
After calculating the mean of every indicator, the researcher divided the students into classification, they are:

a. Students who have no problem at all, no problem are classified into having no problem
b. Students who have small problem, have problem, and have big problem are classified into having problem.

5. The researcher calculated the percentages of the students who have problem and who have no problem. The following formula is used:

\[ P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\% \]

Where:

- \( P \) = Percentage of the student’s who have/ have no problem
- \( F \) = Frequency of students who have/ have no problem
- \( N \) = The number of the students

6. Finally, after getting the result of analyzing the data by using the formula above, the researcher described the third year students’ problems in understanding past perfect tense at English Department of Bung Hatta University.

Finding

After the researcher analyzed the data, he found the maximum possible scores problems in understanding Affirmative, Negative and Interrogative form in past perfect tense was 45 and the minimum possible score was 0. In fact, the highest score got by students was 37 and the lowest score got by students was 11. The researcher presented the raw scores from the highest to the lowest. The researcher got 22.75 for mean and 8.78 for standard deviation. Then, the researcher analyzed the score to find out the number of student who had problem and who had no problem in understanding past perfect tense.

Based on the result of data analysis, it was found that the third year students had problem in understanding past perfect tense at English Department of Bung Hatta University. The researcher found that there was 1 student having no problem at all, 6 students having no problem, 5 students having small problem, 8 students having problem and there was no having problem.

Based on the two classification: (having problem and having no problem), it was found that there were 7 students (35%) had no problem in understanding past perfect tense and there were 13 students
(65%) had problem in understanding past perfect tense.

**The Students’ Problem in Understanding Affirmative Form in Past Perfect Tense**

After analyzing the data, the researcher found the highest score got by students in understanding Affirmative form in Past Perfect Tense was 11 and the lowest score got by students was 1. The researcher got 7.77 for mean and 3.17 for standard deviation.

Based on the result of data analysis, it was found that the third year students’ at English Department of Bung Hatta University had problem in understanding past perfect tense. The researcher found that there was no student having no problem at all, 9 students having no problem, 4 students having small problem, 5 students having problem and 2 students having problem.

Based on the two classification: (having problem and having no problem), it was found that there were 9 students (45%) had no problem in understanding past perfect tense and there were 11 students (55%) had problem in understanding past perfect tense.

**The Students’ Problem in Understanding Negative Form in Past Perfect Tense**

After analyzing the data, the researcher found the highest score got by students in understanding Negative form in Past Perfect Tense was 13 and the lowest score got by students was 2. The researcher got 7.5 for mean and 3.20 for standard deviation.

Based on the result of data analysis, it was found that the third year students’ at English Department of Bung Hatta University had problem in understanding past perfect tense. The researcher found that there was 1 student having no problem at all, 8 students having no problem, 4 students having small problem, 6 students having problem and 1 students having problem.

Based on the two classification: (having problem and having no problem), it was found that there were 9 students (45%) had no problem in understanding past perfect tense and there were 11 students (55%) had problem in understanding past perfect tense.

**The Students’ Problem in Understanding Interrogative Form in Past Perfect Tense**

After analyzing the data, the researcher found the highest score got by students in understanding Interrogative form in Past Perfect Tense was 13 and the lowest score got by students was 3. The researcher
got 7.55 for mean and 3.5 for standard deviation.

Based on the result of data analysis, it was found that the third year students’ at English Department of Bung Hatta University had problem in understanding past perfect tense. The researcher found that there was 3 students having no problem at all, 2 students having no problem, 7 students having small problem, 8 students having problem and 0 student having problem.

Based on the two classification: (having problem and having no problem), it was found that there were 5 students (25%) had no problem in understanding past perfect tense and there were 15 students (75%) had problem in understanding past perfect tense.

**Conclusions**

After interpreting the result of data analysis, it can be concluded as follows:

1. Generally, the third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in academic 2015/2016 had problem. It was proved by the fact that 65% students had problem in understanding past perfect tense focusing on using affirmative, negative and interrogative form.

2. The third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in academic 2015/2016 had problem in using affirmative form in past perfect tense. It was shown by the fact that 55% students had problem.

3. The third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in academic 2015/2016 had problem in using negative form in past perfect tense. It was shown by the fact that 55% students had problem.

4. The third year students at English Department of Bung Hatta University in academic 2015/2016 had problem in using interrogative form in past perfect tense. It was shown by the fact that 75% students had problem.

Since the result of the study showed that the student problem at English Department of Bung Hatta University in understanding past perfect tense in using affirmative, negative, interrogative form was problem. The researcher proposes several suggestions as follows:

**For the teachers**

- The teachers are suggested to explain more about the affirmative, negative and interrogative form, especially in past perfect tense.
The teachers are suggested to give more contextual examples and explanation about past perfect tense.

The teachers are suggested to give more exercise about the affirmative, negative and interrogative form, especially in past perfect tense.

For students

- The students are suggested to study harder and learn more about the affirmative, negative and interrogative form, especially in past perfect tense.
- The students are suggested to do lot of practice to increase understanding past perfect tense.

For further researcher

- The further researchers are expected to find and analyze the factors which cause the students had problem in understanding past perfect tense and past tense.

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