AN ANALYSIS ON THE FIRST YEAR STUDENTS' ABILITY IN USING COUNTABLE NOUNS AND UNCOUNTABLE NOUNS AT SMPN 8 PARIAMAN

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Abstract

This research was aimed at describing the first year students' ability in using countable nouns and uncountable nouns at SMPN 8 Pariaman. The design of this research was descriptive in nature. The population of this research was the first year students at SMPN 8 Pariaman. The total population members was 87 students. The researcher used cluster random sampling technique to take sample. The result of data analysis showed 5 students had high ability, 19 students had moderate ability, and 5 students had low ability in using singular countable nouns. The findings showed 4 students had high ability, 21 students had moderate ability, and 4 students had low ability in using plural countable nouns. The findings showed 6 students had high ability, 17 students had moderate ability, and 6 students had low ability in using uncountable nouns. The findings also showed 5 students had high ability, 22 students had moderate ability, and 2 students had low ability in using noun with indefinite articles. The findings showed 11 students had high ability, 13 students had moderate ability, and 13 students had low ability in using quantifiers. The researcher suggests the teacher to give more explanation about countable nouns and uncountable nouns. The students are suggested to do more practice about the use of countable nouns and uncountable nouns so they can improve their ability.

Key words: Analysis, Countable Nouns, Uncountable Nouns, Students' Ability

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A. Introduction

English is important because it is an international language that is used to communicate in many countries in the world since globalization era. In Indonesia, English is one of the compulsory subjects taught to students at junior high school, senior high school, and university. There are four skills that have to be mastered, namely: listening, speaking, reading and writing. To master those four skills, the students should learn grammar. Grammar has an important role in the use of language. It is a description of the structure of the language. When the researcher did the observation at SMPN 8 Pariaman, the

researcher found the students did not understand and comprehend grammar well. Based on the syllabus of the first year students at SMPN 8 Pariaman, the students had studied about noun since the first semester especially when they studied teaching material about *Shopping Lists*. There are two kinds of noun that they had studied. They are countable nouns and uncountable nouns. However, the first year students had some difficulties in learning English grammar because every language has different patterns. In English, there are several rules in using countable nouns and uncountable nouns. For example, **s/-es** are not used in Indonesian. The researcher had found most of the students had some troubles with the rules in using countable nouns and uncountable nouns.

In English grammar, a noun can be a person, place, thing, idea, or quantity. There are some types of noun, they are: *concrete nouns*, *abstract nouns, countable nouns,* and *uncountable nouns* (Hariyono and Mc.Carthy, 2008:17). *Concrete nouns* deal with nouns that can be touched and seen, some examples: *clothing, furniture, building,* etc. *Abstract nouns* deal with nouns that cannot be touched and seen, such as: *love, anger, friendship, etc* (Supono, 2007:7). *Countable nouns* deal with nouns that can be counted with number, some examples: *book, pen,*

student, etc. Uncountable nouns deal with nouns that cannot be counted with number, some examples: *food, oil, gasoline, soap, etc* (Hariyono and Mc.Carthy, 2008:17).

Countable nouns have singular and plural form. *Uncountable nouns* have only one form. *Articles* ***(a/an)*** are used in singular countable nouns, but they are not used in plural countable nouns or uncountable noun (Kirn and Jack, 1985 : 66). There are some expressions of quantity that can be used in countable nouns, uncountable nouns, or both of them. They are: *Some, any*, *a lot of, much, many, not any, a few,* and *a little* (Azar, 1989:204). There are some units a measure that can be used to mention a specific quantity of uncountable nouns, they are: *a cup of....., two cups of...., a bag of....., a bar of...., a glass of......,etc* (Azar, 1993:204).

The researcher had found the students' problems in using articles, for examples: they used **a** with noun that the first word is vowel and **an** with noun that the first word is consonant. Beside that, the students had problems in using the expressions of quantity, for examples: **a few** is used only before plural countable nouns but many students used **a few** in plural uncountable nouns. Based on these problems, the researcher analyzed the first year students' ability in using countable

nouns and uncountable nouns at SMPN 8 Pariaman. The purposes of this research was aimed to describe the students' ability in using countable nouns and uncountable nouns. The specific purposes of this study were to describe the students' ability in using singular countable nouns, plural countable nouns, uncountable nouns, noun with indefinite articles and noun with quantifiers.

B. Research Method

This research was descriptive in nature. Gay (1987: 189) says that descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study. The population of this research was the first year students at SMPN 8 Pariaman. The total population members was 87 students. For more information, the distribution of the population members was shown in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1

The Population of the First Year

Students of SMPN 8 Pariaman

Class	Students
VII 1	29
VII 2	29
VII 3	29
Total	87

Source : SMPN 8 Pariaman

The researcher used the cluster random sampling technique. Cluster random sampling was used because the population was distributed in groups or classes and they were homogeneous: they have studied with similar curriculum, syllabus, material and allocated time. In selecting the sample, the researcher wrote name of classes (VII 1, VII 2, and VII 3) on pieces of paper. The paper was put into the box. The researcher asked his friend to take one paper with closed eyes. The selected class was VII 1. The number of the students in class VII 1 was 29 students (33.3% of the population).

The instrument used to collect the data is grammar test in the form multiple choice test. The test consisted of 40 items for try out and 30 items for real test. The researcher gave 35 minutes for students to do the test. Before giving the test, the researcher did try out test in the class out of sample. Try out test was done to find out the reliability of test and to analyze item difficulties and item discrimination. To see the reliability of the test, the researcher used split-half method. The researcher calculated the correlation coefficient between the odd and even test items by using Pearson Product Moment Formula.

$$r_{xy} = \frac{N\sum xy - \left(\sum x\right)\left(\sum y\right)}{\sqrt{\left(N\sum x^2 - \left(\sum x\right)^2\right)\left(N\sum y^2 - \left(\sum y\right)^2\right)}}$$

Where: r   =The correlation coefficient between variable x and y

x   =The odd number test

y   =The even number test

N   =The total number of test

Σxy   =The total scores of cross product xy

Furthermore, to determine the total reliability of the test, the result was analyzed by using Spearman Brown formula.

$$r_{total\ test} = \frac{2r_{xy}}{1 + r_{xy}}$$

Where : $r_{total\ test}$ =   The reliability coefficient for the total test

r_{xy} =   The correlation coefficient of the two halves of the test

From the result of try out, the researcher found that the degree of correlation coefficient of the try out was .83 and the reliability coefficient for total test was .91.

In selecting good items of the test, the researcher analyzed the item difficulties and item discrimination of the test. The researcher chose the items that have item difficulties = .30 − .70 to find a good test item for the real test and item discrimination = .40 − .70 as test items to be included in the instrument in order to find a good test item for the real test. From the range of item difficulties and discrimination above, the researcher got 20 items as good item. The researcher also got 10 items were revised and the researcher got 10 items (9, 14, 17, 18, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30) were discarded.

To give score to the students' test, the researcher read the answer sheet and gave 1 for correct answer and 0 for wrong answer. The highest score was 29 and the lowest score was 12. In analyzing the data, the researcher used the procedure as follow :

1. The researcher presented the raw scores of each sample.

2. The researcher calculated the Mean (M) suggested by Gay (1987:361)

$$M = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

And Standard Deviation (SD) suggested by Gay (1987:362)

$$SD = \sqrt{\frac{\sum X^2}{N} \left(\frac{\sum X}{N}\right)^2}$$

Where:

M = Mean

$\sum X$ = Sum of the all scores

$\sum X^2$ = The total X

N = Number of the student

SD = Standard Deviation

3. The researcher classified the students' ability into high, moderate, and low ability.

$> M + SD$

Between M - SD until M + SD

$< M - SD \Rightarrow M - SD$

4. The researcher calculated the percentage of the students who got high, moderate and low ability.

$$P = \frac{R}{T} x100\%$$

Where :

P = Percentage of the students score.

R = The sum of the students who got high, moderate, and low ability.

T = The sum of the students.

C. Findings and Discussion

The result of data analysis showed that the students had moderate ability in using countable nouns and uncountable nouns. In fact 8 out of 29 students (27.6%) had high ability, 15 out of 29 students (51.7%) had moderate ability and 6 out of 29 students (20.7%) had low ability. In order to be clear, see the Diagram 4.1 below:

Diagram 4.1 Students' ability tin using countable nouns and uncountable nouns
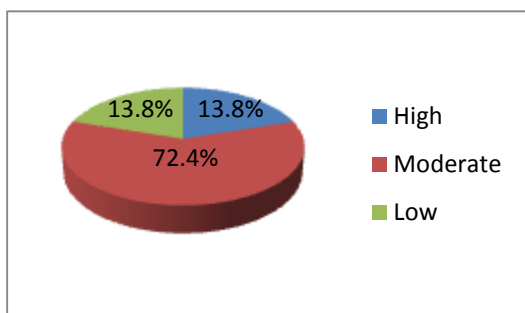

= moder

= low
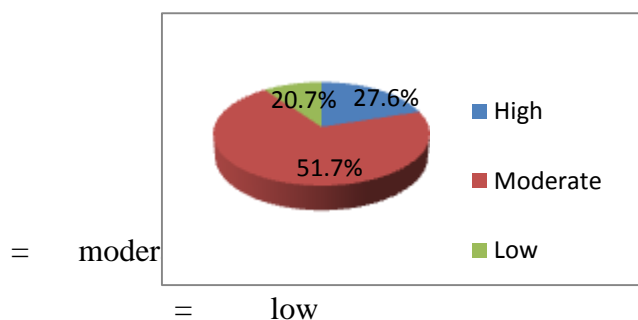
The result of data analysis also showed 5 students (17.2%) had high ability, 19 students (65.6%) had moderate ability, and 5 students (17.2%) had low ability in using singular countable nouns. It can be seen clearly in the Diagram 4.2 below:

Diagram 4.2 Students' ability in using singular countable nouns
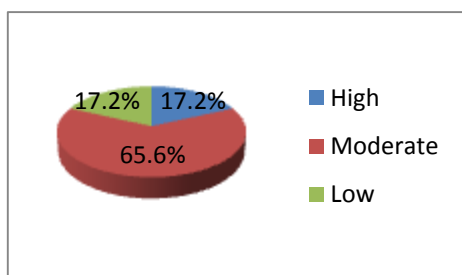

The data analysis showed 4 students (13.8%) had high ability, 21 students (72.4%) had moderate ability, and 4 students (13.8%) had low ability in using plural countable nouns. The researcher presented the findings above in the Diagram 4.3 below:

Diagram 4.3 Students' ability in using plural countable nouns


The findings showed 6 students (20.7%) had high ability, 17 students (58.6%) had moderate ability, and 6 students (20.7%) had low ability in using uncountable nouns. These findings were presented in the Diagram 4.4 below:

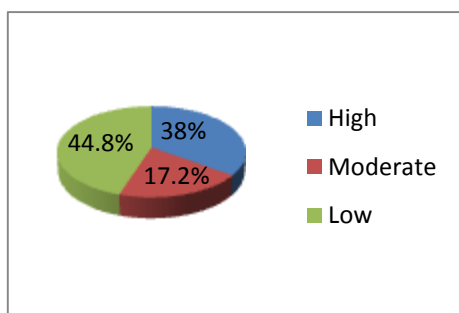**Diagram 4.4 Students' ability in using uncountable nouns**
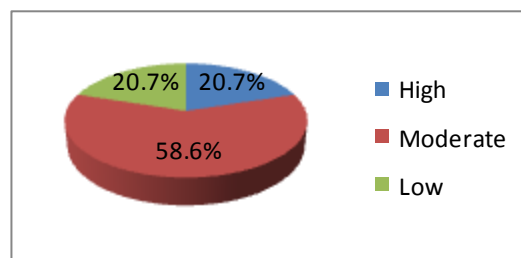
The findings also showed 5 students (17.2%) had high ability, 22 students (75.9%) had moderate ability, and 2 students (6.9%) had low ability in using noun with indefinite articles. In order to make it clear, the researcher presented the findings above in the Diagram 4.5 below:

Diagram 4.5 Students' ability in using noun with indefinite articles
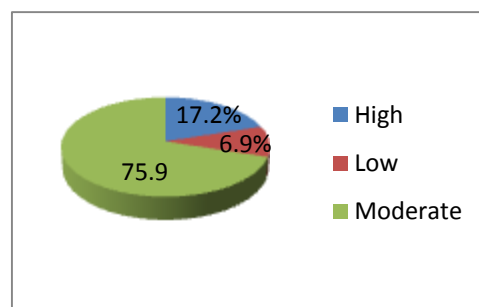
The data analysis showed 11 students (38%) had high ability, 13 students (44.8%) had low ability, and 13 students (44.8%) had low ability in using quantifiers. It can be shown clearly in the diagram 4.6 below:

Diagram 4.6 Students' ability in using noun with quantifiers

Discussion

Based on the findings, the students' ability in using singular countable nouns was moderate (65.6%). For example in the item number 13. In this item, the correct answer is A. Some students still were not able in using *be* and *articles* in singular countable nouns. *Is* is used as *be* in singular countable nouns and *a* is used if the first word of noun is consonant or *an* is used if the first word of noun is vowel. Based on the answer sheets, 12 students had correct answer from 29 students who attended the test.

Based on the data analysis, the students' ability in using plural countable nouns was moderate (72.4%). It can be seen from the students' answer for item number 11. In this item, the correct answer is A. Some students still were not able in using *be* and *expressions of quantity* in plural countable nouns. *Are* is used as *be*

in plural countable nouns, *–s/-es* is added at the end of noun and *some* is used in plural countable nouns. From the answer sheets, 9 students had correct answer from 29 students who attended the test.

Based on the findings, the students' ability in using uncountable nouns was moderate (58.6%). It can be seen from the students' answer for the item number 16. In this item, 17 students had wrong answer.

Another finding, the students' ability in using noun with indefinite articles was moderate (75.9%). For example in the item number 1. More than half of the students had wrong answer.

As the result of analyzing data, the students' ability in using noun with quantifiers was low (44.8%). It can be seen from the students' answer in the item number 29. In this item, the correct answer is C. Some students chose *a, b* and *d* as a correct answer. This fact indicated that the students were not able in using noun with quantifiers. *A glass* and *a cup* are not appropriate answer because they are *the container.* Rice has amount. So, the correct answer is C. *a bag of rice.* Based on the answer sheets, 11 students had correct answer from 29 students who attended the test.

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

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

1. Generally, the first year students' ability in using countable nouns and uncountable nouns at SMPN 8 Pariaman was moderate. It was proven by the fact that 8 students (27.6%) had high ability, 15 students (51.7%) had moderate ability, and 6 students (20.7%) had low ability.

2. The ability of the first year students at SMPN 8 Pariaman in using singular countable nouns was moderate. It was shown by the fact that 5 students (17.2%) had high ability,19 students (65.6%) had moderate ability, and 5 students (17.2%) had low ability.

3. The ability of the first year students at SMPN 8 Pariaman in using plural countable nouns was moderate. It was proven by the fact that 4 students (13.8%) had high ability, 21 students (72.4%) had moderate ability, and 4 students (13.8%) had low ability.

4. The ability of the first year students at SMPN 8 Pariaman in using uncountable nouns was moderate. It was shown by the fact that 6 students (20.7%) had high ability, 17 students (58.6%) had moderate ability, and 6 students (20.7%) had low ability.

5. The ability of the first year students at SMPN 8 Pariaman in using noun with indefinite articles was moderate. It was proven by the fact that 5 students (17.2%) had high ability, 22 students (75.9%) had moderate ability, and 2 students (6.9%) had low ability.

6. The ability of the first year students at SMPN 8 Pariaman in using noun with quantifiers was low. It was proven by the fact that 11 students (38%) had high ability, 5 students (17.2 %) had moderate ability, and 13 students (44.8%) had low ability.

Suggestions

Based on the conclusions above, the researcher would like to propose several suggestions as follow:

1. Based on the result of the study on the students' ability in using countable nouns and uncountable nouns, the students' ability was moderate (51.7%). The researcher suggests the English teachers to motivate the students, to give more

exercises, and more explanation about countable nouns and uncountable nouns (singular countable nouns, plural countable nouns, uncountable nouns, articles, and quantifiers) specifically. So, the English teachers could improve and revise their teaching grammar especially about countable nouns and uncountable nouns.

2. Based on the data analysis and the findings above, the researcher also suggests the students to do more practice about the use of countable nouns and uncountable nouns so that they can improve their ability. More practice will improve their ability.

3. The result of data analysis showed the students's ability in using countable nouns and uncountable nouns was moderate (51.7%). For further researchers, the researcher suggests and hopes they will do the research to find the factors that improve the students' ability in using countable nouns and uncountable nouns, and find good solutions to solve the problem.

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