AN ANALYSIS OF THE THIRD YEAR STUDENTS' ABILITY IN IDENTIFYING SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT OF TOEFL-LIKE TEST AT THE DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER EDUCATION OF BUNG HATTA UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Grammar is one of the most important language components and it was taught by the students of Primary School Teacher Education of Bung Hatta University in the subject of TOEFL Preparation. One of the materials in this subject is Subject-verb Agreement. Although many studies focused on subject-verb agreement on writing skills, while this research will focus on identifying subject-verb agreement in TOEFL-like grammar test. Therefore, the present study aims to find out the third year students' ability in identifying subject-verb agreement of TOEFL-like test at the Department of Primary School Teacher Education of Bung Hatta University. The population of this research was the third year students at the Department of Primary School Teacher Education of Bung Hatta University. The number of sample was 27 students taken by cluster random sampling technique. The instrument for this research was a grammar test in the form of multiple choices to collect the data. The result of this research showed that the third year students had low ability in identifying subject-verb agreement of TOEFL-like test. It was proved that 1 student (3.7%) had excellent ability, 9 students (33.34%) had good ability, 4 students (14.81%) had moderate ability, and 13 students (48.15%) had low ability in identifying subject-verb agreement of TOEFL-like test.

Keywords: Ability, Identify, Subject-verb Agreement, Simple Present Tense, Simple Past Tense.

INTRODUCTION

Grammar is one of the most important language components. Grammar is a solid foundation of a foreign language [1]. This implies that grammar encompasses all of language skills. Grammar is not only the relationship or arrangement of words in sentence but also explains about form, level, construction a sentence and contextualized in meaningful of language [2]. It means that from grammar we do not only know about the word or sentence but also situation context and meaningful in language. Grammar is a study about language structure and how sentences are formed and acceptable [3]. Grammar teaches how to develop clear phrases and effectively communicate their thoughts and emotions. Therefore, without proper grammar, the meaning of everything spoken or written may be lost or cannot be supported.

Grammar is taught in the subject of TOEFL Preparation at the Department of Primary School Teacher Education of Bung Hatta University. In this subject students study subject-verb agreement, listening and reading in short dialogue, and the structure of short dialogues.

Subject-verb agreement is grammatical subject of a sentence agrees in the number with the main verb and the simple principle is singular subjects require singular verbs while plural subjects require plural verbs [4]. It means that agreement is a relation between two elements that should agree on each other, for instance, the agreement between a subject and a verb.

The researcher found some previous related research related to this research. First, the research was done by Setiawati (2023). It was about an error analysis of subject-verb agreement in descriptive text writing of the seventh grade at MTs Ma'arif 02 Kotagajah. She found that the students had problems in applying subject-verb agreement in the sentences, they made disagreement sentences and made mistake in using an auxiliary verb of *to be*. They used an auxiliary verb of *to be* in the verbal sentences but did not use it in the nominal one [5]. Second, the research was done by Mbau et al., (2014). It was related to an analysis on the subject-verb agreement errors in writing paragraph made by

the second semester students of English Department. Based on the result, it can be concluded that the students' errors in using subject-verb agreement in simple present tense indicate the most errors made by the students [6]. Third, the study was done by Dubib (2013) related to error analysis of subject-verb agreement in the writing of EFL Saudi Female Students: A Corpus Based Study. He found that the students are still facing problems in applying subject-verb agreement rules in their writing [7].

Based on those phenomena, the researcher was interested in investigating the third year students' ability in identifying subject-verb agreement of TOEFL-like test at the Department of Primary School Teacher Education of Bung Hatta University.

METHOD

The researcher used descriptive method for this research. Descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study [8]. The population of this research was the third year students at the Department of Primary School Teacher Education of Bung Hatta University. The number of sample was 27 students taken by cluster random sampling technique. The instrumentation for this research was a grammar test in the form of multiple choices. Then the researcher used content validity because they had same materials. The reliability index of the test was 0.87 which was categorized as very high correlation).

To collect the data, the researcher did the test offline for the students. The researcher distributed the answer sheets to the students. Then the researcher explained the instructions the students must follow. Next, the researcher asked the students to do this test in 20 minutes. The researcher collected the answer sheets. The researcher checked the students' answer sheets and gave the students' score. The score is one for the correct answer and zero for the wrong answer. Finally, the researcher counted the total score of each student.

In analyzing the data, the researcher followed several steps. First, the researcher converted the raw scores into converted scores by using the formula. Second, the researcher classified the students' scores on the Criterion Evaluation of Bung Hatta University. Third, the researcher counted the number of students who had excellent, good, moderate, and low ability. Fourth, the researcher calculated the percentage of students who had excellent, good, moderate and low ability using the formula. Fifth, the researcher interpreted the result of data analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The researcher found that 1 student (3.7%) had excellent ability, 9 students (33.34%) had good ability, 4 students (14.81%) had moderate ability, and 13 students (48.15%) had low ability in identifying subject-verb agreement in TOEF-like test in simple present tense and simple past tense as shown in Diagram 1.

Diagram 1
Students' Ability in Identifying Subject-verb Agreement
**of TOEFL-like Test**
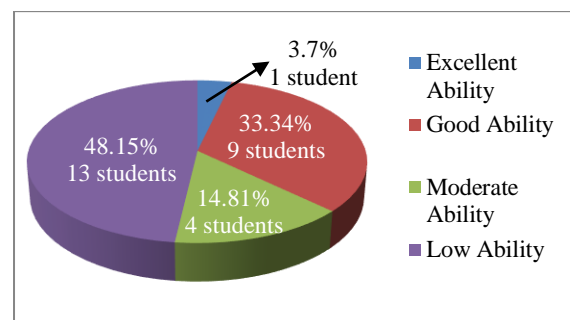
The result finding of this research is relevant with the research conducted by Fitri (2021). She found that all of sections of TOEFL test were difficult for the students because they had level of difficulties bigger than 40%, and the error in subject verb agreement was 73.75%. It was not in line with the study was conducted by Winanda (2019). She found that students' difficulties in answering questions dealing with subject and verb agreement in the structure and written expression of TOEFL were moderate [9]. So, that research has different finding. More specific findings as the answers to research questions are presented below.

1. Students' Ability in Identifying Subject-verb Agreement of TOEFL-like Test in Simple Present Tense

After the researcher analyzed the students' answers, the researcher found that there were many students who had low ability in identifying subject-verb agreement of TOEFL-like test in Simple Present Tense. It was supported by the fact that there was 1 student (3.7%) had excellent ability, 1 student (3.7%) had good ability, 11 students (40.75%) had moderate ability and 14 students (51.85%) had low ability. In order to be clear, see the Diagram 2 below:

Diagram 2
Students' Ability in Identifying Subject-verb Agreement in Simple Present Tense
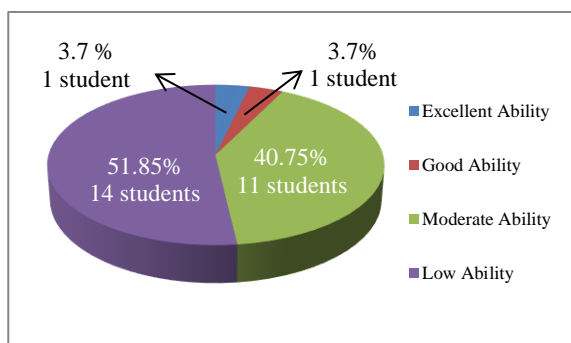
It means that the students did not master in identifying subject-verb agreement in simple present tense. As another of fault, students had many incorrect answers in identifying subject-verb agreement in simple present tense. The result of this study is in line with previous studies. The first was conducted by Dubib (2013). The result of his research was that the students had 103 total errors relating to subject-verb agreement of the present verb *to be: is* (82 errors), *are* (17), and *am* (4). She concluded that students are still facing problems in applying subject-verb agreement rules in their writing.

The second previous study was conducted by Mbau (2014). The result of her research presented that the students' errors in using subject-verb agreement in simple present tense indicate that the most errors made by the students. It is proved by the percentage of students' errors; 70.75% errors of subject-verb

agreement, 14.15% errors of final –s/es, 9.43% errors of using expressions of quantity, 5.66% errors of using there + be, 0% errors of some irregularities.

2. Students' Ability in Identifying Subject-verb Agreement of TOEFL-like Test in Simple Past Tense

The third year students at the Department of Primary School Teacher Education of Bung Hatta University had low ability in identifying subject-verb agreement of TOEFL-like test. It is supported by the fact that there was 1 student (3.7%) had excellent ability, 11 students (40.75%) had good ability, 2 students (7.4%) had moderate ability, and 13 students (48.15%) had low ability. In order to be clear, see the Diagram 3 below:

Diagram 3
Students' Ability in Identifying Subject-verb Agreement in Simple Past Tense
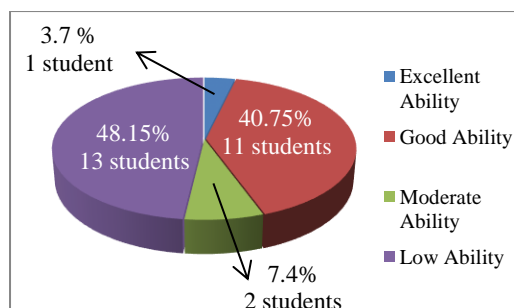
It means that the students still have problems in identifying subject-verb agreement in simple past tense and they did not understand in identifying subject-verb agreement in simple past tense. The finding of this study is in line with previous study that has been conducted by Winanda (2019) that entitled The Third Year Students' Difficulties in Answering Structure and Written Expression of TOEFL at English Department of Bung Hatta University. Winanda (2019) found that the percentage of student's difficulties in answering question dealing with past form the structure and written expression of TOEFL is 73.91%.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

From analysis that have been discussed, the third year students at the Department of Primary School Teacher Education of Bung Hatta University have low ability in identifying subject-verb agreement of TOEFL-like test in simple present tense and simple past tense. Based on the conclusions above, the writer would like to give several suggestions. The lecturers are expected to be able to vary teaching techniques, to find alternative technique and implement them in teaching subject-verb agreement in simple present tense and simple past tense, for example giving more exercises. The students are suggested to join the TOEFL Preparation class seriously, and pay attention to the lecturers' explanations, and do more exercises to identify subject-verb agreement in simple present tense and simple past tense. Last but not least, the further researchers are suggested to find out the cause of students' low ability in answering TOEFL-like test.

Keywords: Ability, Identify, Subject-verb Agreement, Simple Present Tense, Simple Past Tense.

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