

**THE CORRELATION BETWEEN GRAMMAR  
MASTERY AND THE ACCURACY OF THE  
LINGUISTIC FEATURES IN WRITING OF THE  
THIRD SEMESTER STUDENTS OF ENGLISH  
EDUCATION PROGRAM OF FKIP AT MATARAM  
UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC YEAR 2014/2015**



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### APPROVAL

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*The Correlation Between Grammar Mastery and The Accuracy of the  
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**The Correlation Between Grammar Mastery and The Accuracy of the Language Features in writing of the Third Semester Students of English Education Program of FKIP Mataram University Academic Year 2014/2015**

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**ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk menentukan apakah ada korelasi antara penguasaan tata bahasa dengan ketepatan ciri-ciri kebahasaan pada tulisan siswa dan untuk mengetahui ragam teks yang cenderung sulit disusun oleh siswa. Sebelum melakukan penelitian ini, penulis mengamati dan berasumsi bahwa penguasaan tata bahasa tidak berkorelasi dengan ketepatan ciri-ciri kebahasaan pada tulisan siswa. Populasi dalam penelitian ini adalah 167 mahasiswa Semester III Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris FKIP Universitas Mataram tahun ajaran 2014/2015, sedangkan sampel dalam penelitian ini adalah 42 orang siswa yang diambil melalui teknik *sampling* kelas secara acak. Namun, 6 orang siswa tidak ikut serta karena masalah keuangan, sehingga hanya 36 orang siswa yang berperan sebagai subjek penelitian. Siswa diminta untuk menjawab dua jenis tes yang parallel, yaitu tes tata bahasa dan menulis. Pada tes tata bahasa, siswa diminta untuk memilih jawaban yang paling tepat untuk 25 soal, sedangkan pada tes menulis, mereka menulis dua jenis teks yaitu teks *recount* dan eksposisi. Setelah menganalisis dan mengkalkulasi data, ditemukan bahwa nilai koefisien korelasi ( $r_{xy}$ ) adalah .5775. Untuk menarik kesimpulan mengenai apakah penguasaan grammar siswa berhubungan dengan ketepatan ciri kebahasaan pada tulisan siswa, kemudian nilai  $r_{xy}$  tersebut dibandingkan dengan nilai pada tabel-r pada tingkat kepercayaan .05 dan .01. Nilai tabel-r pada tingkat kepercayaan .05 adalah .3291 dan pada tingkat kepercayaan .01 sebesar .4238. Karena nilai  $r_{xy}$  lebih tinggi dibandingkan dengan nilai tabel-r pada kedua tingkat kepercayaan tersebut, dapat disimpulkan bahwa ada korelasi antara penguasaan tata bahasa dengan ketepatan ciri kebahasaan pada tulisan siswa Semester III Program Studi Bahasa Inggris FKIP Universitas Mataram tahun ajaran 2014/2015. Selain itu hal ini menunjukkan bahwa teks *recount* cenderung lebih sulit untuk disusun oleh siswa daripada teks eksposisi.

**Kata kunci:** *korelasi, penguasaan tata bahasa, ketepatan, ciri-ciri kebahasaan*

## ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in order to determine if there is any correlation between grammar mastery and the accuracy linguistic features in students' writings and to find out which type of text that is dominantly difficult to write. Before conducting this research, the writer observed and assumed that grammar mastery does not correlate with the accuracy of linguistic features in writing. The population of this study was 167 third-semester students of English Education Program of FKIP Mataram University academic year 2014/2015, while the sample designed was 42 students taken through random cluster sampling technique. Unfortunately, 6 of them left because of financial problem, so there were only 36 students appeared as the subjects. The subjects were asked to do two types of parallel test: grammar test and writing test. In the grammar test, students were asked to choose the best answer for 25 items, while in the writing test, they were writing both recount text and exposition text. After analyzing and calculating the data, it was discovered that the correlation coefficient ( $r_{xy}$ ) was .5775. To make a conclusion whether the grammar mastery correlates with the accuracy of linguistic features in writing, the  $r_{xy}$ , then, was compared to the r-table at the both level of confidence .05 and .01. The r-table in the level of confidence .05 was .3291 and in the level of confidence .01 was .4238. Since the  $r_{xy}$  was higher than r-table of both level of confidence, it is concluded that there is any correlation between grammar mastery and the accuracy of the linguistic features in writing of third semester students of English Education Program of FKIP at Mataram University academic year 2014/2015. Moreover, it shows that the recount text was more dominantly difficult to compose than exposition text.

**Key words:** *correlation, grammar mastery, accuracy, linguistic features.*

## INTRODUCTION

English has become the vital language in this globalization era; it is used by most countries in the world which worked as the universal language spoken around the world. This fact makes most people learn it, although English is not always used in the daily life. However in learning a language, people have to concern with its grammar, because it will help them to have better performance in speaking, reading, listening and writing. It is clear that grammar is part of language. In addition, grammar is very important aspect of written language in line with vocabulary; besides unity, coherence and mechanic (e.g. spelling and punctuation).

However, the use of grammar as a set of rules itself is conversely different with it is which is applied in writing. Grammar in writing means more than such rules. If there is have/has in a senetence, the following verb is in verb 3. The correct form is *Anin **has** bought an English book at Gramedia*, not *\*Anin **has** buy an English book at Gramedia*. Not only grammar governs as a rule, but it also constructs the ideas depending on the context of the writing. For example, the use of past tense in recount text exposes that the writer tends to retell his past experience. The use of adverbs of time such as yesterday, last week, last holiday, two days ago, five years ago, etc. assist the use of past tense to point out and

emphasize that the activities happened in the past.

Writing is an essential skill but difficult for EFL students to accomplish. Based on the researcher's observation in FKIP Mataram University, although grammar and writing are taught for four semesters, sometimes most of the students still confuse about what steps they should do and which grammar will be used to make a good composition, and so does the rules of grammar and mechanics (e.g. use correct verbs and pronouns, commas and other marks of punctuation). It seems that students feel difficult to avoid of making errors in writing. Even though the students passed the grammar subject, some of them failed in writing class.

Throughout the years, different theories have offered direction on how to teach writing; from focusing on writing product to process of composition (Frodesen, 1991; Yan, 2005). That shift of paradigm result in confusion of the role of grammar in EFL writing instruction. However, a research conducted by Ulfa (2009) shows distinctive supposition in which students' writing ability is strongly correlated with the grammar mastery. The result opposes the reality which most students are success in writing class while some of them failed in grammar test.

Starting from a research conducted by Ulfa and the fact faced that these two subjects enormously assist the students in

order to accomplish final test to get S1 title (i.e. writing thesis academically), the writer decides to investigate the correlation between students' grammar mastery and the accuracy of linguistic features in writing that will be conducted to the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester of English Education Program students of FKIP at Mataram University academic year 2014/2015. The study was limited to five category of accuracy summed up from the linguistic features of both recount text and exposition text; they are the use of pronoun, cohesive device, temporal sequence, sentence structure and vocabulary.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **1. Definition of Grammar**

All languages have their own rule known as grammar. Grammar explains rules of producing infinite set of possible sentences which are meaningful and well ordered (i.e. consist of subject, predicate, object or complement to make complete sense), so these products of language can be understood. According to Penny (1996), grammar as the way words are put together in order to make correct sentences. Moreover, Madsen, Bowen and Hilferty (1985) define grammar as the rules by which we put together meaningful word and parts of words of language to communicate messages that

are comprehensible. The term 'grammar' has systematic ambiguous meaning (Chomsky & Halle, 1968). Firstly, grammar refers to the explicit theory constructed by the linguist proposed as a description of the speaker's competence. Secondly, the term refers to the competence itself. Every human being who speaks a language knows its grammar which exists in minds of its speakers. A speaker may have some diversity of the language knowledge with other speakers, but there must be shared knowledge that enables them to communicate through the language. This shared knowledge is the rule which is attempted by linguist wished to describe as basic linguistic knowledge of a language. From this basic linguistic knowledge, a language learner might be eased to learn a target language.

Leech, Biber and Conrad (1988) portrayed that whenever one write or speak, he is dealt with enormous selection of choices: not only choices of what to say but also how to say it. The vocabulary and grammar used to communicate are influenced by several factors e.g. the reason of communication, the setting, the interlocutor, and whether it is in speaking or writing. These choices give rise to systematic patterns of choice in the use of English grammar. For example in writing a letter, diction and grammar used to write to someone we knew for long time are

different from the writing written for applying a job. The language used in application letter is more formal than the letter for a friend. Moreover, it is a common believe that grammar is really crucial since colleges of English Education Program are demanded to produce academic writing in form of thesis and do a seminar on it, which requires them to master, at least comprehend grammar of English. If they are not able to be aware of right or wrong construction of English, it might be difficult for them to convey their ideas.

## **2. Definition of Error**

Error is different with mistake. Error is a term refers to systematic failure made by a language learner showing his lack of knowledge of the target language (TL), while the word mistake relates to unsystematic failure which comes from learners' lapses in performance (Ellis, 2008). Richards proposes the sources of error are intralanguage and interlanguage error (1974, in Haryanto, 2007: 16-17). Intralanguage errors are resulted from faulty or partial learning of TL. It may be caused by the influence of one TL item upon another. On the other hand, interlanguage errors come from language transfer caused by the learner's native language interference such as transfer error.

## **3. Definition of writing**

Widdowson (1978), states that writing is the act of making up correct sentences and transmitting them through the visual medium as mark on paper. In other words, writing is a work of composing acceptable sentences, either the structure or meaning, and conveying them through pen or ink on paper, through chalk or marker on board, or even other medium.

All writings consist of sentences that may be described as sets of arranged words expressing ideas. Words do not make sentences unless they are arranged grammatically. Since sentences are the source of written language, they will serve as illustrations of how the teachers explain grammar, vocabulary, and writing mechanics while teaching organizational writing. Basic knowledge of these writing components also has been learnt for two previous semesters. After students understand sentence structure, the teacher can move to sentence arrangement in a paragraph. The organization of any text depends greatly on the literary genre it represents, for instance, if a text is a narrative, or procedure, or a descriptive, each genre requires and organizational format (Reids, 1993).

## **4. Grammatical Error in Writing**

Grammar is defined as a set of shared assumptions/rules of the way language works. The assessment to measure students' grammar mastery can

be based on their ability to state the rules of grammar. However, it is better to measure students' ability to use the grammatical points to share their emotions, feelings, ideas or assumptions with other people. Therefore, the teaching of grammar should be integrated in the language development process of the four language skills.

For EFL students in Indonesia, learning English seems difficult since the target language has different system from the native language. This difference sometimes affects the students to produce errors in applying grammar. Levenstone in Arnillah (2011: 15) claims that "students' erroneous output –their composition errors in particular—are not one removed, but to remove from native speakers' version". Errors are not only corrected into what learners want to say but also those errors are corrected into what the native speakers will say or write. In this case, the researcher analyzed students' errors regarding the linguistic features in the writings such as the use of appropriate participant and vocabulary, errors in connectives, errors in temporal sequence, and errors in sentence structure

## **5. Theoretical Framework between Grammar and Writing**

There is basically an idea which says that grammar affect writing, and writing affect grammar. According to Setiyadi (2006), proposes that the

grammar of the target language is learned through largely inductive process from the more specific to the more general. Grammatical rules are presented in text using the target language. While given an example of writing, a language learner is asked to analyze the text, therefore they find out the grammatical pattern of the text by himself. The process of learning grammar in writing may also be done by having imitative writing. Students write a text based on the generic structure and grammatical pattern of the text has been read. Therefore, they can apply their knowledge about the ways the writing made and the particular grammar pattern used to have better performance in the writing.

## **6. Previous Study**

Many other studies conducted by several researchers in line with this research. One of them is a research entitled "Does EFL Students' Grammatical Ability Account for Writing Ability? a Case Study" by Huang (2011). The participants of his study were ten students at a private tutoring center who were first year-senior high school students from different schools in Southern Taiwan. The ratio of female to male test takers was 7:3. They received formal English study from school for four years; none of them passed the elementary level of the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT). The results showed that the

correlation coefficient was .595, indicating a moderate correlation between grammar and writing. However, this figure was not statistically significant on account of a probability level being at .07. This indication means that the resulting correlation between grammar and writing was due to chance. Evidently, more test takers and more test items could have contributed to its statistical significance.

Moreover, Ulfa (2009) conducted a case study related to writing skill and grammar mastery entitled "The Correlation between Writing Skill and Grammar Mastery: a Case Study at the Second Year Students of SMPN 7 Mataram in Academic Year 2008/2009". To obtain the result of this research, she took 35 students from 350 students as the sample who are asked to write an essay at least 100 words about their own amazing experience (variable x) and 25 multiple choice items to measure their grammar mastery (variable y). The result of her research was indicating that there was a positive and strong correlation between students' writing skill and their grammar mastery which is shown by the coefficient correlation ( $r$ ) = 0.655.

The newest correlation research was conducted by Rozak (2014) regarding grammar mastery and grammatical errors in writing. The subject of this study was a class of second semester students at English department of Islamic University

of Malang which consisted of 25 students who were tested twice: multiple choice tests and writing test. Multiple choice tests with 30 items was given in order to measure the grammar mastery, while the writing test was used to collect the data about the writing ability through one-paragraph of a text type chosen: description text and recount text. The result of the study indicated that there was a significant correlation between grammar mastery and grammatical errors in writing of the second semester students. Since the computed  $r$  ratio was 0.924, while the critical  $r$  value at level of significance 0.01 at the total of subject 25 students was 0.475. Thus, the computed coefficient was higher than critical value.

The results of the studies conducted by Ulfa (2009) and Rozak (2014) above show the significant positive and strong correlation between students' grammar mastery and the writing skill. On the other hand, the study conducted by Huang did not show a significant relationship between the variable observed. It was shown by the value of probability level was at 0.7 which indicates the correlation was due to chance.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research was designed as correlation research with descriptive-quantitative method. The method was used since the researcher longs to gain

data of grammar mastery of 3<sup>rd</sup> semester students of English Education Program at FKIP Mataram University. Descriptive method was used in order to find out how many or how long of something, which gathers and analyzes some information found to be described qualitatively (Arikunto, 2007). This method was used to analyze the data from the writing in order to identify students' accuracy of linguistic features in writing recount text and expository text and show which type of text is more dominantly difficult for students. In addition to descriptive method, quantitative method was also used in this research teasing out some possible relationship between students' grammar mastery of pronouns, cohesive devices, sentence structure, temporal sequence, and vocabularies, and students' writing of recount and exposition text.

Sample of this study was 42 students of III-A Afternoon class of English Education Program at FKIP. This selection used random cluster sampling technique where the entire population was divided into groups or clusters, and a random sample of these clusters was selected. However, 6 students left because of financial problem; so there were only 36 students took role as sample. Variables observed in this study were grammar mastery (x) and the accuracy of linguistic features in writing (y). Variable x was measured from the students' score of the

grammar test; it was considered as independent variable. Variable y, which was the dependent variable, was measured from students' accuracy of linguistic features in writing test of recount text and exposition text. To collect the data, the researcher used two instruments or test in order to support the data analysis; they were grammar test and writing test. First, the researcher used grammar test which was intended to measure students' grammar mastery. The grammar test consisted of 25 multiple choice items containing the use of pronoun, cohesive devices, temporal sequence, sentence structure and vocabulary. Time allotment given for doing this test was 30 minutes. Second, writing test was used in order to find out the accuracy of the linguistic features students made in writing process. In the writing test, students were asked to compose two types of text: recount text and exposition text. There was no specific topics given for each kind of text to the students; therefore, the researcher gave them 70 minutes to compose their own writing.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **» Result**

After conducting the research, the data required were obtained. The data were students' scores in both grammar test and writing test. They then were analyzed by employing the  $r_{xy}$  and t-test

formula to obtain the level and the significance value of correlation.

$$\begin{aligned}
 r_{xy} &= \frac{N(\sum xy) - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{(N\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2)(N\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2)}} \\
 &= \frac{36(92507) - (1806)(1803)}{\sqrt{(36(94130) - (1806)^2)(36(93893) - (1803)^2)}} \\
 &= \frac{3330252 - 3256218}{\sqrt{(3388680 - 3261636)(3380148 - 3250809)}} \\
 &= \frac{74034}{\sqrt{(127044)(129339)}} \\
 &= \frac{74034}{\sqrt{16431743916}} \\
 &= \frac{74034}{128186.364} \\
 &= .5775
 \end{aligned}$$

After calculated the  $r_{xy}$  which was .5775, the correlation coefficient, then, was compared to interpretation table of r-value and it shows average level of correlation between grammar mastery and the accuracy of linguistic features in writing. In order to know the significance of the correlation between grammar mastery and the accuracy of the linguistic features in writing, moreover, the researcher then calculated it through the following formula:

$$\begin{aligned}
 t - test &= \frac{r\sqrt{n-2}}{\sqrt{1-r^2}} \\
 &= \frac{.5775\sqrt{36-2}}{\sqrt{1-(.5775)^2}} \\
 &= \frac{.5775\sqrt{34}}{\sqrt{1-.3335}} \\
 &= \frac{.5775(5.8309)}{\sqrt{.6665}} \\
 &= \frac{3.3673}{.8164} \\
 &= 4.1247
 \end{aligned}$$

The result of the calculation, then, was interpreted into the t-table. The values were  $2.032 \leq t\text{-test} \geq 2.728$ . It signifies that

there is significant average correlation between grammar mastery and the accuracy of the linguistic features in writing.

## » Discussion

The result of calculating the value of correlation coefficient was .5775. This correlation coefficient shows that the relationship between grammar mastery and the accuracy of linguistic features in writing was in average level. In order to know whether this correlation coefficient is significant or not, it is necessary to find out the significance by consulting the  $r_{xy}$  with r-table. The critical value which was found out in the table r product moment at number of subjects 36 and confidence level 95% (.05) and 99% (.01) were .3291 and .4238. If  $r_{xy}$  is higher than the value of r-table, the  $H_0$  was rejected and  $H_a$  was failed to be rejected. In vice versa, if  $r_{xy}$  is lower than r-table, the  $H_0$  is failed to be rejected and  $H_a$  is rejected. Since the obtained value (.5775) is higher than the both critical value (.3291 and .4238), the Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) explained that there was positive correlation between grammar mastery and the accuracy of linguistic features in writing of the third semester students of English Education Program of FKIP at Mataram University academic year 2014/2015. Therefore, in this research there was positive correlation which means the  $H_a$  is failed to be rejected.

The result shows the correlation between grammar mastery and the accuracy of the linguistic features in writing quantitatively. Moreover, both grammar test and writing test were parallel. They covered the same aspect of linguistic features regarding the use of pronoun, cohesive device, temporal sequence, sentence structure, and vocabulary. Hence, it can be concluded that students' score on grammar test correlates qualitatively with the accuracy of the linguistic features in their writing.

Additionally, the result of research data displayed that students mostly had difficulties in sentence structure for both answering the grammar test and composing recount text and exposition text. In grammar test, the sentence structure questions were items no 1, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9. The amounts of students who answer the items correctly were the lowest than the items of other categories. In line with grammar test, most students were also failed to make correct sentence structures in writing recount text and exposition text. It could be observed that most of student's mistakes were about sentence structure. It can be noticed that mistakes were mostly regarding sentence structure. Most of them were caused by transfer error from L1 to TL. In *Bahasa Indonesia* (the L1), there is only one type of verb for all tenses, unlike English which has different type of verb for each

tenses. Therefore it can be concluded that the writer failed to transfer the word into the TL accurately.

The previous studies indicate that grammar correlates with writing. Moreover, the research conducted by Rozak (2014) shows strong correlation between grammar mastery and grammatical errors in writing, in which students' grammar mastery is important to upgrade and improve their writing ability. Moreover, he suggested that a language learner should have capability in identifying the appropriate concept of grammar will be written in order to have an acceptable meaningful writing. In line with Leech, Biber and Conrad (2002), result of this research shows that grammar mastery is an essential factor that influences the students' productive skills; not only writing ability. Certain grammar makes it is possible to communicate common types of meaning successfully. Without grammar, it is difficult to make comprehensible sentences or paragraph.

At last, the value of t-test (4.1247) was compared with the critical value of t-table in the row of df 34 and at significance level .05 and .01. The critical values were 2.032 at significance level .05 and 2.728 at significance level .01. The comparison is used to wrap up if there is significant correlation between variable x and variable y. The value of t-test was higher than the both critical values which

were showing that there was significant correlation between grammar mastery (variable x) and the accuracy of linguistic features in writing (variable y).

From the calculation of  $r_{xy}$  and t-test consulted with r-table and t-table, it can be concluded that there was significant correlation between grammar mastery and the accuracy of the linguistic features in writing of third semester students of English Education Program of FKIP at Mataram University academic year 2014/2015. Whenever the value of grammar mastery increased, the value of accuracy of linguistic features in writing increased too. Likewise, as the value of grammar mastery decreased, the value of accuracy of linguistic features in writing decreased as well.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

### **Conclusion**

Based on the data analysis and discussion above, my conclusions are:

- a. There is a positive average correlation between grammar mastery and the accuracy of the linguistic features in writing. The statement means that the higher the mastery of the students in grammar, the better their accuracy on linguistic features in their writing and vice versa.
- b. Based on the students' scores of writing on both types of text, recount

text was more dominantly difficult to write by the students than the exposition text.

### **Suggestion**

After conducting the result of this research, I would like to offer several suggestions.

- a. Students have to be introduced the concept of grammar related to the linguistic features of each type of text and practice the grammar in communicative tasks.
- b. Teachers have to set up an effective strategy to improve students' comprehension in writing. The strategy is like giving clear information about linguistic features of each text and some steps in order to have a good composition. It is important to know those steps before writing in line with the characteristics of each writing or essay.
- c. Further study needs to be conducted on the students' difficulties in comprehending grammatical pattern related to linguistic features of text in writing.

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