



## **AN ANALYSIS OF THE SECOND YEAR ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS' ERRORS IN USING PASSIVE VOICE IN THE ACADEMIC WRITING SUBJECT OF UNIVERSITAS NEGERI PADANG**

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### **Abstract**

This research was aimed at analyzing the errors made by the second year English department students in using passive voice in the Academic Writing Subject. Specifically, it was aimed at finding the types of errors and the causes of errors made by the students in their academic writings. This research was a descriptive qualitative research. The sample of this research was the K3 students consisting of 19 students. The sample was taken based on the cluster sampling technique. Then, the students' academic writings were used as the source of the data. The data collection was taken by using the theory of Surface Structure Taxonomy proposed by Dulay et al. (1982). Related to the causes of errors, the theory proposed by James and Brown was used to study the causes of errors made by the students. The findings show that there were 367 errors made by the students. The highest type of errors made by the students was 216 omission errors (59%) and followed by 104 misformation errors (28%), 34 addition errors (9%), and 13 misordering errors (4%). It was found that the major causes of errors were interlingual and intralingual factors. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the students did the four types of errors.

**Key words:** Students' Errors, Passive Voice, Academic Writing

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The students of English Language and Literature Department of Universitas Negeri Padang should have competence in academic writing. Clearly, they are required to make a paper or thesis as the final project to graduate from their study. As the paper or thesis cannot be written carelessly, the second-year college students have to train themselves to be able to write scientifically before making the final project. Undoubtedly, the ability to write in a scientific way has to be gained by the students through the Academic Writing, Article Writing, and Paper Thesis Writing subject before making the final project.

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Writing for academic purposes is writing in a formal style. It can be essays, journals, research articles, papers or thesis. Here, in the Academic Writing subject, the students are required to compose, develop, and organize ideas formally and scientifically. Swan (2005) asserts that the passive voice is commonly used in academic and scientific writings. According to Reynolds, Delahunt, and Maguire (2012) academic writing is writing in a formal style which is used mostly for scientific works. The passive voice is frequently used in these scientific works.

The use of passive voice in academic writings aims to avoid the use of *personal* pronoun in the writings. The personal pronoun, such as “I” or “We” is not encouraged in academic and scientific writings and it depends on the discipline and the nature of the technical writing. The use of 3rd person is encouraged in the academic writing in many disciplines (Johanne, 2002). The uses of the *personal* pronoun “I” or “We” must be avoided because it makes the messages of the writing become inflammatory. Thus, the use of the 3rd person is suitable in academic writings because in academic writings, the writer does not focus on the person who is doing the action, but the thing that is receiving the action. Thus, the use of the passive voice is extremely useful in academic writings as it allows writers to highlight the most important participants or events within sentences by placing them in the beginning of the sentence.

However, the students of English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang in 2014 and 2015 Academic year tend to use active voice rather than passive voice. After analyzing some of their academic writing, it is found that the use of passive voice is limited. Then, related to the passive voice, the students often make errors. These errors mostly occur to the students who have bad grammar. The errors also mostly occur when the student use complex sentences in constructing passive voice even though the errors found also occur in simple sentences and sometimes in conditional sentences. For example, *it will be easy and better if it taught from the small ages, actually for kindergarten pupils*. The type of error occurred in this sentence is omission error. The student omits the to be, *is*. Another example, *motivation in writing can be do in several ways*. The type of error occurred in this sentence is misformation error. The student uses wrong verb in the sentence that should be in the past participle form: *done*. Another error that happens in the students’ academic writings is when constructing active voice, but it is written in passive voice. For example, *.....it can be make sensitivity to the other voices*. This sentence should be active voice, but it is written in passive voice even though it still has error. If it is written in active voice, it should be *it can make sensitivity to the other voices*. The auxiliary verb *be* should be omitted.

Moreover, the students of English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang in 2016 Academic Year also tend to use active voice rather than passive voice. It is because of the lack of grammar and the habit of using active voice when writing. Based on the result of an interview from one of the lecturers who is teaching the Academic Writing subject, it is found that the level of the students’ grammar competency is still low. Related to the passive voice, the students make errors. The errors mostly occur when constructing passive voice in complex sentences. Then, related to the verbs, such as happen, occur, seem, exist, and

appear, the students are confused whether these verbs are used in active or passive voice. For example, *it is still existed in some countries*. It should be *it still exists in some countries*. These verbs are used in active voice, and they cannot be made passive (Lane and Lange, 1999).

In addition, based on the result of an interview from six students of all of the students who are taking the Academic Writing subject, it is also found that they tend to use active voice rather than passive voice because they think that active voice is simpler rather than passive voice. Moreover, they do not really understand about the rules of using passive voice, so they choose to use mostly active voice in academic writings. They also admit that their grammar competency is still low, so errors may occur when they try to use passive voice in their academic writings.

Related to the errors, they are divided into four types based on Surface strategy taxonomy proposed by Dulay, et al. (as stated in Hadi, 2014) and caused by two major factors. These types are errors of omission, errors of addition, errors of misformation, and errors of misordering. Then, the two major causes are interlingual errors and intralingual errors. Interlingual errors refer to interference from the native language while intralingual errors refer to the complicated systems of the target language itself. Related to these causes, Jufrizal (2015) found that the linguistics condition, learning materials, methods and techniques of learning cause different problems in learning English. He found that many students of English Department were in serious problem in using passive voice in their academic writings. He also found that some students did not understand about the rules of passive voice and did foolish mistakes in writing passive voice.

Due to these problems, analyzing students' errors is considerably important. The errors can be an indicator and a description for students and the lecturers to see in which level the students are in learning the target language. Thus, for the students, these errors will lead them to a better improvement and encourage them to study hardily in the future. Then, for the lecturers, they may try to do a better improvement in teaching by finding a better teaching method to decrease the students' errors. Thus, in this study the researcher wants to investigate the types of errors proposed by Dulay, et al. (as stated in Hadi, 2014) and the causes of the errors made by the second-year college students of English Department, Universitas Negeri Padang, in using passive voice in the Academic Writing subject.

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

This research was a descriptive qualitative research. Creswell (2012) argues that descriptive qualitative research develops a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon. Therefore, by using this type of research, the writer analyzed, interpreted, and described about the types of errors and the causes of the errors in using passive sentences by students in their academic writings. This research was conducted to the second year students in English Department, Universitas Negeri Padang. The data collected were analyzed in order to answer the research questions.

The population of this research was 140 students on the second year in English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang, especially the students who

were in the fourth semester. They were chosen as the population because they were studying Academic Writing subject. Clearly, there were 140 students of six classes: K.1, K.2, K.3, K.4, NK1, and NK2. The sample of this research was K3 English students chosen based on the cluster sampling technique.

The students' academic writings were used as the source of the data of this research. The theory of the types of errors proposed by Dulay et al. (1982) were used to collect the data on the use of passive voice sentences contained in the students' academic writings. Then, the causes of errors were analyzed based on the theory proposed by James (1998) and Brown (2007) through the types of errors found. Because the source of the data was document, the researcher did not need to do an instrument validation. Then, related to the reliability of analyzing the data, rater reliability was chosen. The rater reliability of this research was an English lecturer who was teaching a writing subject.

The students' academic writings were collected through the lecturers who were teaching the Academic Writing subject. *First*, the researcher collected the students' academic writings in the Academic Writing subject. These academic writings were got through the lecturers who were teaching the Academic Writing subject. Then, the researcher read the students' academic writings thoroughly to find the passive voice sentences in those writings. After the passive voice sentences were found, the researcher checked the errors contained in the passive voice and grouped the errors into the types of errors based on theory of Surface strategy taxonomy proposed by Dulay, et al. (1982) and the causes of errors based on the theory of causes of errors proposed by James (1998) and Brown (2007). The number of each type of errors found was put in a table. Then, to know the analysis of the errors contained in the students' passive voice sentences in their academic writing subjects was reliable, the data collection was given to the rater. The rater and the researcher together checked the data collection on the students' errors in using passive voice in their academic writings based on the theory of the types of errors.

After getting the number of errors for each type and the number of all errors, the types of errors were calculated. The types of errors collected were calculated based on the formula proposed by Bungin (2006, p. 133) as stated below:

$$N = \frac{fx}{N} \times 100 \%$$

The researcher interprets the percentage of the types of errors found in using passive voice in the students' academic writings by explaining the characteristics of the types of errors. Based on the errors of all types, the researcher studied the causes of the errors based on the theory in the Chapter 2.

## C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Types of the Students' Errors in Using Passive Voice in Their Academic Writings

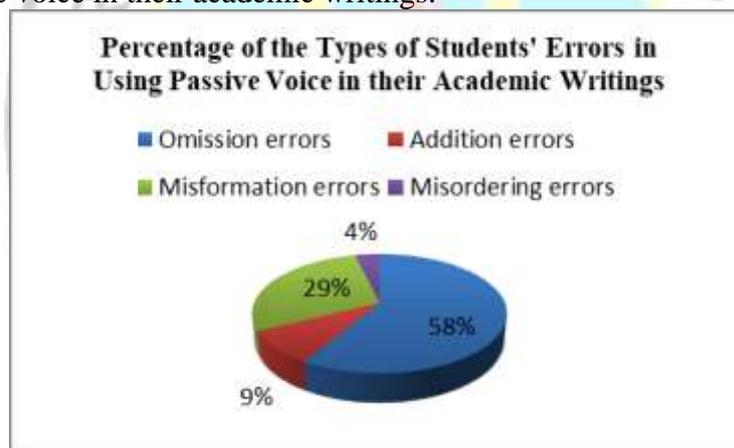
After getting the numbers of errors of each type of errors found in using passive voice sentences in the students' academic writings, they are put in the form of percentage by using the formula proposed by Bungin. The table 3 below showed the percentage of students' errors based on the four types:

*Table. 3 Percentage of Students Errors Based on the Types of Errors*

<b>Types of Errors</b>	<b>Number of Errors</b>	<b>Percentage of Errors</b>
Omission	216	59%
Addition	34	9%
Misformation	104	28%
Misordering	13	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>100%</b>

Based on table above, it was found that the second year English Department students in 2016 Academic year did 367 errors in total. There were 216 omission errors (58%), 34 addition errors (9%), 104 misformation errors (28%), and 13 misordering errors (4%). Based on the finding, it could be seen that the highest number of errors was omission errors with 207 errors based on all of the four types of errors. Then, the lowest number of errors was misordering errors with 13 errors based on all of the four types of errors.

The chart below shows the percentage of the students' errors in using passive voice in their academic writings:



Based on the chart above, it is seen that the highest percentage of types of errors done by the students was omission errors with 58%. On the other hand, misordering errors was the lowest percentage of types of errors done by the students. Related to the previous studies, this result was different from the result of the studies conducted by Hadi (2014). Hadi found the highest percentage of errors was misformation errors with 64,63% while the lowest percentage of errors was addition errors with 2,89%. More details, Purnama (2014) also found the highest percentage of errors was misformation errors of present perfect in passive voice with 31, 3%. Nevertheless, still related to errors in passive voice, Hilmi, Rozimela, and Tiarina (2013), found that the highest percentage of errors was error in using past participle form of verb with 36,25% followed by error in using auxiliary be with 28,75%, and error in using passive voice sentences that should be written in active voice. However, still related to the finding about the types of errors, Tiarina (2017) found the type of errors most frequently made by freshmen was omission errors same as the result of this research.

## 2. Causes of the Students' Errors in Using Passive Voice in Their Academic Writings

Errors in language learning are caused by some factors. The causes of errors that have been studied based on the theory proposed by James (1998) and Brown (2007) in Chapter 2. There were two major factors of errors found in learning the target languages: interlingual and intralingual factors.

### a. Interlingual Factors

The students did errors in language learning because the rules of their mother tongue are different from the rules of their target language. This case made students tend to use the linguistic forms of their mother tongue. As the example, there was one sentence found in the students' academic writing, "*this essay will explain you the next thing that closely related to movies.*" This sentence showed that the students tried to use the rules of their mother tongue. They forgot to put *to be* "is" before the verb "related".

Clearly, in the students' mother tongue, *to be* was not used even in the passive voice sentences. In the students' mother tongue, especially in passive voice sentences, a sentence contained subject, passive verb, and agent while in the target language a sentence contained subject, *to be*, past participle (verb 3), and agent. Not only that, in the students' academic writings, the use of article "a, an, the" were often forgotten by the students. They frequently omitted the articles. Hamzah (2012) found that the use of articles was very confusing for Indonesian learners. Hamzah admitted that English articles rules were fairly complicated and complex in the production level because learners should work on two different things-content and language. Thus, when using the rule of their mother tongue in constructing sentences in the target language, the students might do errors because both of the languages were different.

Moreover, in learning foreign language, of course, their mother tongue will influence their target language. Because of that, translation might happen. For example, the students wrote, "*Thus, this policy is not suitable also if it was applicated in non-boarding schools ...*" The verb "applicated" in the sentence appears because of translation. In the students' mother tongue, Bahasa Indonesia, the word appears because of the translation from the word "diaplikasikan". It should be written to be "applied". Another example, the students wrote, "*The first analisis is that, standarization can only be achieved if the other variable is the same.*" The noun "standarization" also appears because of translation. The word comes from the translation of the word "standarisasi". The word "standarisasi" is the students' mother tongue. It should be written to be "standardization". It can be seen that both of two sentences appear because the interference of the students' mother tongue to their target language.

### b. Intralingual factors.

Learning foreign language is difficult. It is because of the complicated system of the target language itself. As Richard (1974) has explained about the causes of errors related to intralingual aspect, there were four causes of errors found:

#### 1.) Overgeneralization

Related to the types of errors found, this causes of errors resulted addition errors. Addition errors occur when the students add an item such -s or -ed for noun or verb-inflections in a sentence that should not be added. This error happened because the students used a certain structure that was over generalization in the target language. As it was found, this sentence contained addition errors because of overgeneralization: “Soy milk is a milk that made from soybeans.” In this case, there was an over article “a”. It should not appear in the sentence because “milk” is uncountable noun. It did not need article “a”. The overgeneralization factor resulted 33 addition errors or 9% of all of the types of errors found.

2.) Ignore of Rule Restriction

Based on the types of errors found, ignore of rule restriction resulted misordering errors. These errors occur when the students put a sentence or phrase in incorrect order. It occurred because the students did not apply the rules of the target language. As it was found, this sentence contained a misordering error:” *Here will be presented some points related to the issue.*” In this case, the subject should not “here”. It should be “some points”. The reconstructed sentence is *some points will be presented here related to the issue.* The ignorance of rule restriction factor resulted 13 misordering errors or 4% of all of the types of errors found.

3.) Incomplete Application of Rules

Based on the types of errors found, incomplete application of rules resulted omission errors. These errors occur when the students omit an item that should be put in a sentence. It occurred because the students forget the rules of the target language. As it was found, this sentence contained an omission error, “*Many content are allowed to be showed....*” In this case, the noun “content” should be written in plural forms because it was followed by adjective “many”. It means that there was an item omitted in the sentence. It should be “contents”. The reconstructed sentence is *many contents are allowed to be showed....* The incomplete application of rules factor resulted 207 omission errors or 58% of all of the types of errors found.

4.) False Concept Hypothesized

Based on the types of errors found, false concept hypothesized resulted misformation errors. These errors basically are the result from faulty comprehension of distinction in the target language. As it was found, this sentence contained a misformation error, ” *Nowadays they have a place to go to watch the newest movies which has been released.*” In this case, there was a misformation of verb “has” in the sentence. It should be replaced to be “have” because the subject was *the newest movies*. The subject was plural. The reconstructed sentence was *nowadays they have a place to go to watch the newest movies which have been released.* The false concept hypothesized factor resulted 102 misformation errors or 29% of all of the types of errors found.

Table. 4 Causes of errors

No	Causes of Errors	Sentences found
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1.	Interlingual factors		This essay will explain you the next thing that closely related to movies ( <i>absence of auxiliary verb “is”</i> )
2.	Intralingual factors	Overgeneralization	Soymilk is a milk that made from soybeans ( <i>addition of an article</i> )
		Ignore of Rule Restriction	Here will be presented some points related to the issue. ( <i>misordering of putting the subject</i> )
		Incomplete Application of Rules	Many content are allowed to be showed.... ( <i>omission of s for the noun “content”</i> )
		False Concept Hypothesized	Nowadays they have a place to go to watch the newest movies which has been released ( <i>misformation of has</i> )

Related to the factors of the occurrence of errors, Elmadwi (2015) did a research about problems encountered by students at al-Amal secondary school in using passive voice in written English. He found that most of the students made errors in using passive voice in written English. The difficulties were systematic errors such as interference of the mother tongue, over-generalization, ignorance of rule restriction, incomplete application of rules and false concept hypothesized. It can be seen that the causes of the students' errors are the interference of the students' mother tongue to the target language and the complicated rules of the target language. For these reasons, lecturers have to find a good teaching method to decrease the students' errors because they are going to make a paper of thesis as the final project for graduating their study.

#### **D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

Based on the findings and discussion above, it can be said that the English department students in 2016 Academic year in the Academic Writing subject of Universitas Negeri Padang made the four types of errors in using passive voice in the academic writings. The sequence of the types of errors made by the students was *omission errors, misformation, addition, and misordering errors*. Moreover, more than one type of errors occurred in one sentence. These errors often found in the students' complex sentences in passive voice even though the errors sometimes occurred in simple sentences or conditional sentences. Deeply, these errors occurred because of two major factors: *interlingual and intralingual factors*. Then, the *intralingual factor* was divided into four types: *overgeneralization, ignore of rule restriction, incomplete application rules, and false concept hypothesized*.

Thus, it is really recommended for the English Department students to practice more to use passive voice sentences in writing. Many practices done by the students will lead them to be better, so errors will not occur. Then, it is suggested for English lecturer to explain the grammar materials clearly especially related to the use of the rules of passive voice because it is one of other aspects in writing academic writing that have to be paid much attention. The students might say they never learn it before, but it also has the possibility in which the students have learned it but they do not understand it well. Therefore, a deep and clear explanation will help the students in understanding the material better.

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