



An Analysis on Students' Ability in Using Compound-Complex Sentences in Writing a Short Essay

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Abstract

The purpose of the research is to figure out the students' ability in constructing a compound-complex sentence in essays writing. The design used in this research is descriptive research with second year students of the English language educational program of UNP as the research population. There were 30 students taken as the sample selected by using cluster sampling technique in K5-2018 class. The data were collected through documents of students' essay writing. The essays were analyzed by the researcher, and it was revised by a valuator and two raters as the validity and reliability of this research. They are the lecturers of the English department at Universitas Negeri Padang. The finding shows that the ability of students in writing compound-complex sentence is in the level of good with the average percentage 79.18%. Most students generally can make compound-complex sentences in their essays writing, but they have problems in: 1) incorrect use of punctuation, especially comma, 2) lacks a subject or a verb in the compound-complex sentence. Therefore, an intensive attention should be given by the lecturer to facilitate the students to practice both writing and grammar by using peer correction.

Keywords:

Compound-Complex

Sentence, Essay Writing

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INTRODUCTION

In writing, students learn how to write words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. When students make a sentence they should concern with many aspects such as capitalization, spelling, punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure. In writing, grammar is one of the important language components that should be concerned to create a good writing. The students are expected to use correct and appropriate grammar.

As university students who take English language as a major, they should understand that writing and grammar cannot be separated. They both are related

subjects that must be master by students to produce good quality writing. Both skills will be useful for students to make their final assignment as a requirement for graduation and also to teach students at school when they already graduated. Therefore, students in English department are required to be able to master the writing skills along with the other skills. Fareed et.al (2016) state that for language development, writing is an essential skill; however, it is deemed a difficult ability, particularly in the context of English as a second language (ESL) in which students face many writing difficulties.

There are a lot of difficulties faced by students in writing English as a foreign language such as less mastery of vocabulary and less mastery of English grammar. Debata (2013) states that grammar is a study of words and the ways in which words work together as an invisible force that leads us to place words together into sentences. In writing, grammar is one of the important language components that should be concerned to create good writing. The students are expected to use a correct grammar and appropriate grammar. According to Thornbury (1999), grammar is partly the study of what forms (or structures) are possible in a language. This reveals that grammar maintains a language's shape and structure to be easily understood.

The role of grammar is significant to be applied in a writing activity. As Calkins suggests in Lin (2008), using students' writing as the basis for teaching grammatical concepts is the most effective way to improve student grammar command in writing. A grammar consists of principles or rules that allow creating an infinite number of possible sentences out of a finite number of words (Veit, 1986). The structure exists whether it can be described by anyone or not. Applying correct structure of sentence is the uppermost point in English writing.

Students in English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang learn writing from the basic to advanced levels. It is started from paragraph writing, essay writing, academic writing, and paper or thesis writing. At the first year, the students learn about how to make a good writing paragraph that consists of more than two sentences, and at the second year, they learn about how to make a good writing in their essay writing. Zemach and Rumisek (2003) state that an essay is a group of paragraphs written about a single topic and central main idea. It must have at least three paragraphs, but a five-paragraph essay is a common length for academic writing. The structures of an essay are the introduction, the main body, and the conclusion. The students must pass the essay writing subject before come into academic writing or paper as a final writing course.

In essay writing subject, the application of grammar in sentence structure that is used by students is seen. It can be used to know the ability of students in constructing a type of sentences. There are four categories of sentences in English, they are simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences and compound-complex sentences (Andersen, 2014). They are the kinds of sentence that is often used by the students, but here, the researcher will analyst a compound-complex sentence as one of the sentences types that are used by students in their essay writing. The researcher wants to know about the ability of students in using compound-complex sentences in their essay writing because this kind of sentence is the most complicated sentence that need to be master by students in English Department of UniversitasNegeri Padang. The reason why the sentence is really complicated because it is the combination of three types of

sentences such as simple, compound and complex sentence. So this type of sentence is the high level in making a sentence.

A compound-complex sentence is a combination of compound and complex sentences. A compound sentence consists of two independent clauses that is connected by coordinating conjunction such as for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so (FANBOYS). A complex sentence is a sentence that consists of one independent clause and one or more dependent clause (Eastwood, 2002; Swan, 2005; Rosa et al., 2007). It is connected by subordinating conjunction such as adjective clause, noun clause and adverb clause. In a compound-complex sentence, it has at least two independent clauses and at least one or more dependent clause (Andersen, 2014). In simple terms, an independent clause can be a sentence on its own while a dependent clause cannot be a complete sentence.

In the process of learning English as the second language for students, it is common to find learners who have problems in constructing the correct compound-complex sentences. It is caused because many students don't understand in depth the kinds of sentences. When they write something, they just write things without know the type of sentences that they used. Students are conscious how to make a good sentence and sometimes not exactly in the placement of punctuation and conjunction in their writing; however, they must deeply consider whether their sentence is appropriate or inappropriate. So, they will need to know sentence errors to develop their writing effectively.

METHOD

This research was conducted using a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. This kind of research described the analysis of data in students' essay writing. Gay et.al (2009) cite that qualitative research involves collecting, analyzing and interpreting comprehensive narrative and visual (i.e., non-numerical) data to gain insight into a specific phenomenon of interest. In this research, the researcher explained and described how the ability of students in using compound-complex sentences in writing a short essay was. Creswell (2005) stated that descriptive research is used to study research problem requiring an exploration in which little is known about the problem. This research was conducted to second year students in English language teaching Program, Universitas Negeri Padang. In addition, this research was involved in collecting data by using instruments. The data was collected and analyzed by researcher to answer the research question.

Table 1. The Research Population

No	Class	Number of Students
1	K-1 2018	27
2	K-2 2018	32
3	K-3 2018	35
4	K-4 2018	37
5	K-5 2018	30
Total		161

In the research study, it needed the samples which were being the representative of the population. According to Bordens and Abbott (2008), a sample is a small subgroup chosen from the target population. In taking the sample of the

study, the researcher used cluster sampling technique. This sampling technique has two clear advantages such as relatively easy and quick way to obtain the large sample and the measurement of individual could be done in group (Gravetter:2015). The samples were selected by choosing one class that was K-5 2018.

The instrument of this research was document of essay writing students in second years of English Educational Program. The document is stable data sources which can be read and reviewed multiple times and remain unchanged by the researcher’s influence or process. It is a way of collecting data by reviewing existing documents. Patton (2002) stated that document is written materials and other documents from organizational, clinical, or program records in written responses to open-ended surveys. Data consists of collections of documents collected in such a way as to record and maintain meaning. In this research, document was used to find out the students’ ability in constructing compound-complex sentences. The documents were taken from Essay writing task of second-year students of English Educational program in UNP.

To know each ability of the students in using compound-complex sentences the following formula was used:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100 \%$$

P = Percentage

F = Frequency of students’ correct pattern of compound-complex sentence in Essay Writing

N = Number of sample observed

To find out the ability of all students the researcher used this formula:

$$M = \frac{\sum x}{N} \times 100 = \dots \%$$

M = The mean score

$\sum x$ = The average of students’ score level

N = The number of students

The result of the average score was classified into the following table below:

Table 2. Score classification

Score Range	Classification
80 – 100	Excellent
60 – 79	Good
50 – 59	Average
0 – 49	Poor

Quoted from Fitri, A., Azhar, F., & Eliwarti (2017)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Finding

The researcher tried to find and identified the compound-complex sentences in students' essay writing. From the essays, 178 sentences contain compound-complex sentences. The data was validated by a valuator to make sure that those sentences were correct. After analyzing the data by the researcher and rater, the data of students' ability in using compound-complex sentences construction is described in table below:

Table 3
Students' ability in constructing compound-complex sentences in students' essays writing.

NO	Students Code	Number of CCS construction	Score of CCS construction	Classification of score level
1	S1	2	70	Good
2	S2	2	69.5	Good
3	S3	10	81.7	Excellent
4	S4	6	75.3	Good
5	S5	5	82.6	Excellent
6	S6	6	70.8	Good
7	S7	16	87.9	Excellent
8	S8	1	85	Excellent
9	S9	5	78.4	Good
10	S10	2	77.5	Good
11	S11	3	70.3	Good
12	S12	5	91.4	Excellent
13	S13	7	86.8	Excellent
14	S14	1	93	Excellent
15	S15	3	74.6	Good
16	S16	6	82.1	Excellent
17	S17	11	79.6	Good
18	S18	7	82.7	Excellent
19	S19	3	71.3	Good
20	S20	6	73.8	Good
21	S21	9	78.5	Good
22	S22	4	76.7	Good
23	S23	5	61.8	Good
24	S24	7	71.1	Good
25	S25	4	84	Excellent
26	S26	11	81.3	Excellent
27	S27	7	91.2	Excellent
28	S28	8	84.2	Excellent
29	S29	9	76.2	Good
30	S30	7	85.2	Excellent

Based on the data analysis, it was found that the level of students' ability in using compound-complex sentences in their essays writing was in the good level. Most of students can make compound-complex sentences well, but there are some errors

that were found by the researcher in students' essays writing when making compound-complex sentences on it. The common mistakes are fragments and run-on sentences.

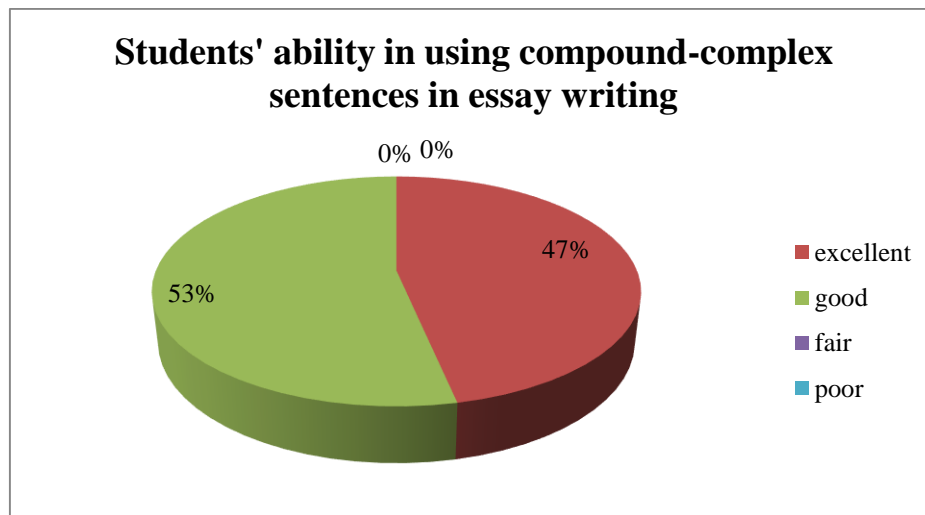


Figure 1. The students' ability in writing compound-complex sentence

The average score of each student's ability is extracted from the results of each categories of score classification. Among 30 samples, there are 14 (47%) students categorized as excellent, which means that they can construct compound-complex sentences well; 16 students (53%) are categorized good which means that they can construct a compound-complex sentence, but they make some mistakes on it. In conclusion, most of the students are generally able to construct compound-complex sentences in their essay writing. It can be seen from the chart that no student gets a fair or poor score in their compound-complex sentence construction.

Discussion

Based on the findings of this research, some noteworthy points need to be discussed. The result of data analysis reveals that the English Department students in UniversitasNegeri Padang are good in writing compound-complex sentences, but in this case, the students still tend to omit the comma before the connector. Besides, they also omitted a subject after the connector to indicate the second sentence. Therefore, it can be concluded that students had a lack of grammar knowledge, especially in writing compound-complex sentences.

Finding also shows that the students' problems in writing compound-complex sentences are caused by lack of understanding in the structural properties of compound-complex sentences. The students are sometimes not aware of the rules in writing compound-complex sentences, such as ignoring the punctuation, lack of comma or semicolon, lack a subject or a verb, and lack of knowledge of function of each connector. These errors appeared to cause them to produce incorrect compound-complex sentences occasionally.

Furthermore, the finding of this research is in line with the findings from a study conducted by Ernawati (2014). Based on the result of data analysis, she found that most of students get difficulty in compound-complex sentences. They are

judgment that compound - complex sentence is complicated structure so they need comprehension deeply. It can be seen from the frequency of students in writing compound-complex sentences that get low score in compound-complex sentences with 82 sentences. Sari (2017) found that the students had problems in writing compound-complex sentences. She found some errors in students' essays while writing compound-complex sentences. In some students work, it was found the error occurred in different type. In missing subject, it has 3 errors or 4.2 %; in fused sentence, it has 26 errors or 37.1%, and in comma splice, it has 42 errors or 60 %. Another research that was conducted by Rini (2019) also found the errors in constructing compound-complex sentences. The findings of the research were 76 compound-complex sentences, it was found that total errors are made by the fourth semester students was 26 errors. There are two classification of error as follows; sentence fragment and run-on sentence. The error percentage of missing subject was 14 errors or 18,42%, missing verb was 1 error or 1,31%, missing subject and verb was 1 error or 1,31%, dependent clause was 0 error or 0%, the fused sentence was 3 errors or 3,95%, and comma splice was 7 error 9,21%. The researcher found 34,21% of the total errors. Therefore, the result of this research shows that the fourth semester students in English department of the state institute Islamic studies of Metro did not understand the components and structure of the compound-complex sentence.

As shown in the average of this study, the second year students' comprehension about using compound-complex sentences in their essays writing is generally good. It may be caused by several factors. The fact that they already know and learn compound-complex sentence since the beginning of their first year is one of the factors. In the first semester, they have been taught about compound-complex sentence generally in Intensive Course subject. In Basic Grammar subject, the compound-complex sentence is explored in more details and it is continued in Intermediate Grammar. The types and kinds of sentences are discussed in depth. Therefore, they are able to apply in using compound-complex sentences in the essays. Furthermore, the students were given more time to write the essay at home.

If these findings are compared to the findings of this research, it can be inferred that the ability of students in writing compound-complex sentences are at the level of good. They know how to use compound-complex sentences in their essays writing, but they make some errors in writing compound-complex sentences. It is expected that English Department students should have a higher understanding of grammar, especially on compound-complex sentence.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that the students' ability in constructing compound-complex sentence in their essay writing is generally good with an average score of 79.18%. The students already know how to construct compound-complex sentence, but they still make some mistakes when trying to construct such sentences in their essay writing.

In the essay writing task, it shows that the students have problems in writing compound-complex sentences. They make some errors in constructing compound-complex sentences in their essay writing. The students' errors in writing compound-complex sentence are fragments and run-on sentences. The students also appear to

often be weak in using punctuation, and they tend to use incorrect connectors. Another mistake that found in students' compound-complex sentence was fragment sentence. There are still students who forget to write a subject or a verb in the compound-complex sentence.

In scoring the data, the researcher uses a rubric in table 2 as a measurement for this research. There are some aspects that need to be used by the researcher to count the data such as capitalization, spelling, punctuation, grammar and sentence structure.

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