

SYNTACTIC PROPERTIES OF THE ENGLISH VERBS IN THE STUDENTS' ESSAYS

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Abstract: This cross-sectional study aimed to explain the epithet of verb performance within the syntactic properties gained by the students in their essays, i.e. (1) tense, (2) aspect, (3) voice, and (4) mood. The data had been gathered from the 50 samples for each graded level by using a proportional random sampling technique. The processes of soft data attempted to search the epithet of verb performance through the equilibriums between accuracy and inaccuracy. As a result, the research findings indicated that epithet of the students' verb performance was 12.06%, including tense (27.83 %), aspect (21.51%), voice (-35.72%), and mood (34.63%).

Keywords: syntactic properties, verbs, students' essays.

The English department students are expected to be accustomed to using grammatical forms and patterns accurately and creatively in meaningful contexts. The specific grammatical forms will differ from one language to another. The grammar of the English verbs is a fundamental matter. The verb not only undergoes certain changes to indicate tense, but it also changes to show voice. The verb base gets probability for formation of lexical and grammatical affixation. Those probable changes take place to suit themselves with the meaningful contexts.

The previous study about grammar and lexemes reported by Basri (1997: 25-6) showed the English department students had made the ambiguous statements to communicate their messages. Their two main problems were discovered on grammatical and lexical levels. For instances, the inaccurate/inappropriate use of grammatical rule caused the ambiguity on grammatical level, and then the homophones and minimal pairs caused the ambiguity on lexical level.

Prototypical verbs in English express concepts involving action or change. Such verbs have the essential properties as follows: (1) they appear in either a 'past tense' or 'non-past' form, and (2) the non-past tense takes a definite suffix (Payne, 2002:

17). The past form and the past participle have the same inflectional entity. One interesting question about the suffix -ed noted by Garson (2002: 4) is that "What underlies our ability to distinguish between verbs taking a regular past tense and those taking irregular past tenses?"

The syntactic aspect is another grammatical property that is used to indicate whether a verb is progressive or non-progressive, perfective or non-perfective. The grammatical accuracy of the English verbs must take present participle for progressive aspect and present form for non-progressive and non-perfective, and past participle for perfective after the primary auxiliary 'have'. Auxiliary verbs serve to realize the grammatical categories associated with the verb phrase, especially tense, aspect, and mood. The combinations of auxiliary verbs may occur in a verb phrase construction. When the given combinations occur, the relative order among auxiliary verbs is as follows: modal-have-be (progressive)-be (passive).

Mood relates to the attitude of the writer or of the subject toward the action or event in which a verb phrase is a part of a clause, involving finite verb (indicative, subjunctive, imperative) and non-finite verb (infinitive, participle). The writer's atti-

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tudes refer to what appears in his or her minds. Thus, the relation appears between language and thought, and as well as social context. The accuracy of attitudes is grammatically expressed either by modals or by primary auxiliaries, depending upon the writer's intentional notions. Levelt, et al. (2002: 4) express that there are many roads to Rome. A lexical concept in language used is often activated as part of a larger message that captures the speaker's communicative intention.

There is evidence to support the idea that the application of grammar is the foundation stone of natural language. The previous study indicates that children acquire a working knowledge of grammatical system of their language at a very early stage. At a time, they begin to verbalize and point to things and repeat words adults say to them (Herndon, 1976: 122). It is obvious that children's grammar works in that language.

Accuracy is one of the verbal properties that commonly refers to the ability to produce grammatically correct expressions. Accurate expressions are not always acceptable unless they are appropriate, but the accuracy indicates the quality of expressions produced by the speakers or writers. Therefore, this property is adopted to be the issues in this study. Accuracy in line with the percentage degree is specified for the verbs within the essay production used by the students in different levels. In this connection, it is fruitful to consider Laratu's (1997: 72) notion that remarks that accuracy is related to the correct use of language in terms of grammatical point of view.

Sentences may consist of obligatory and optional elements. The sentence 'Rita is singing in the bathroom' consists of obligatory and optional elements. 'Rita' and 'is singing' are obligatory elements, whereas 'in the bathroom' is an optional one. The optional elements are those that may or may not occur in any expression, but the obligatory ones, such as verbs, are required to occur in that expression for constructing the complete thoughts.

The syntactic evidence of the English verbs to be investigated in this study includes these properties: tense, aspect, voice, and mood.

Tense relates to a real-world time: past, present, future. These verb tenses are usually contrasted to indicate the different activities, events, or states. The discussion of tense certainly involves the verb class. Hudson, 2001: 145) notes that every tensed verb has a tense, and its tense is generally decided by its form rather than by its meaning. Thus, tense is a feature in relation to the time of the event, which is designated by a verb.

The verb is the most important word class of all. Verbs are important because: (1) The principal part of a sentence is normally a finite verb; (2) Verbs have more complex valencies than any other word classes and provide more 'syntactic glue' that holds the sentence together; and (3) Verbs have a richer system than any other class (Hudson, 2001: 151).

The English verbal expressions (often called verb phrases) take several basic components. The verb forms participate in verbal expressions (Rubba, 2001: 1). Every verb has four basic forms that are called the principal parts of the verb. These parts consist of present form (e.g. visit, write), past form (e.g. visited, wrote), present participle (e.g. visiting, writing), and past participle (e.g. visited, written). These forms are clearly used in the related tenses.

Aspect relates to the way in which a lexical verb is both regarded as progressive or non-progressive and perfective or non-perfective (Jackson, 1985: 75). Therefore, probabilities that occur in this aspect are (a) progressive, e.g. He is speaking; (b) perfective, e.g. He has spoken; (c) perfective-progressive, e.g. He has been speaking; and (d) non-perfective and non-progressive, e.g. He will speak.

There is evidence that a verb takes the progressive suffix or the ending -ing. Then, the perfective aspect takes 'have' with the ending-ed for a regular verb. This instance of evidence is concerning the structure dependence principle that determines grammatical operations based on the syntactic category.

A verb not only undergoes certain changes to indicate tense, but it also changes to show voice. Voice relates to the distinction between active and passive forms, referring to verb phrase and clause. The passive form takes the past participle of the verb in a clause. The active voice takes the form of 'Something does something'. The passive is in the form of 'Something is done'. Overuse of the passive voice makes a passive dense (overused). However, not all passives can be avoided; some passives are necessary and useful (Lynch, 1997: 20).

In theoretical and descriptive study on sentence or clause types, mood is especially used for the verbs to make reference to syntactic and semantic contrasts signaled by alternative paradigms of verb, e.g. indicative, subjunctive, and imperative moods. Semantically, it is concerned with the speaker's attitudes towards the factual content of his utterance, e.g. uncertainty, definiteness, vagueness, and possibility (Crystal, 1987: 198).

The speaker or writer's attitudes have a wide range of meaning. They refer to what appears in his

or her minds. The concepts expressed through a language are often performed as part of larger messages that capture their communicative intentions. The attitudes are performed either by modals or by primary auxiliaries, depending upon their intentional concepts.

In fact, the auxiliary verb serves to realize the grammatical categories associated with the verb phrase, especially tense, aspect, and mood. It is used with another verb in a sentence, such as 'She is waiting', 'He did not come', and 'They have finished it' (Richards, et al, 1987: 23). The underlined words are called 'auxiliary verbs', for they have grammatical functions for the accurate constructions of verb tenses. Then, the words such as 'waiting', 'come', and 'finished' are categorized as lexical verbs.

Obviously, another important grammatical category in this study is that of mood or modality. Thus, a separate set of forms must be made for assertion (indicative mood), for a supposition (subjunctive mood), and for command (imperative mood). Notions of modality are very commonly expressed in English by means of auxiliary or main verbs, such as logical necessity, possibility, ability, permission, obligation, and etc. using modality.

Each of the research variables (tense, aspect, voice, and mood) had been divided into superordinate indicators and (sub-) subordinate indicators as being exposed in the findings. These divisions had been done on purpose for obtaining detailed information about the research problems. The superordinate indicators as follows are applied to identify, classify, and clarify the given syntactic properties are put forward in the following: (1) tense consists of past, present, and future in their combinations with simple, continuous, perfect, and perfect continuous forms; (2) aspect consists of progressive or non-progressive, and perfective or non-perfective; (3) voice consists of active and passive forms in clause constructions; (4) mood consists of finite (indicative, subjunctive, imperative) and non-finite (infinitive and participle).

METHOD

The populations of this research consisted of the English department students of PTS Kopertis Wilayah IX Sulawesi. Those students as sources of data took English as their major subject. The names of subjects (lectures) had been distributed into 8 semesters (S 1). Their levels were graded into four levels, i.e. level 1 (semester 2), level 2 (semester 4), level 3 (semester 6), and level 4 (semester 8). This

study used a proportional random sampling technique to determine the 200 samples (50 samples for each level) that had been produced by the different graded levels of students of English departments.

The essay writing as a research instrument was used for gathering data about the students' problematic repertoires of the English verbs based on the syntactic properties in terms of tense, aspect, voice, and mood with their own constituents.

Therefore, the students had been provided with 12 topics that they had to choose the most familiar (attractive) one for an 80 minute-essay-writing.

The camp of this study was a cross-sectional design through the setting of essay writing. The written data of this study were concerned with the linguistic facts or qualitative substances that were gathered immediately from determinant samples of English department of PTS Kopertis Wilayah IX Sulawesi in a certain period of time. Hence, the categories of data were qualitative, internal, primary, and cross-sectional based on their characteristic, source, mode, and period, respectively. The raw data were re-edited, organized, processed by numbering the items and bracketing the verbs within clauses in order to prepare soft data or typical written corpora for analysis management.

Indicative variables and issues syntactic evidence were identified and classified with ME: Infl/ Der and SE: Ts/Ap/Vc/ Md codes, respectively. Detailed codes were completed further. They were also specified. These codes were classified into the types of accuracy (acc) and inaccuracy (inacc). The types of inaccuracy were cited. Then, the problematic issues with their specifications were accounted through a tally technique for being further computed in percentage rate. It was done after the numerical codes had been given to those indicators and types of inaccurate problems.

The percentage rates based on the tally accounts of diverse constituents and the types of inaccuracy were computed by using the following formulas:

$$1. \text{ Perc Rate} = \frac{\text{Acc/Inacc}}{\text{Acc+Inacc}} \times 100\%$$

$$2. \text{ Performance} = \frac{\text{Acc Perct} - \text{Inacc Perct}}{\text{Inacc Perct} - \text{Acc Perc}}, \text{ OR}$$

Notes:

Acc Perct : Accuracy Percentage

Inacc Perct : Inaccuracy Percentage

Formula 1 is used for finding the percentage rates for accuracy and inaccuracy of all indicative variables and issues that occurred in each level.

Formula 2 is used for finding the percentage rates for performance in each level.

Based on the given analyses which had been identified, classified, tabulated, and graphically diagrammed from the previous to the next levels and among the diverse constituents of verbs, diverse changes that made the evidence in such environments of syntactic properties of the English verbs were organized, specified, and elaborated for the provisions of abstract statements. The empirical provisions were administered, linked, and interpreted for coining the abstract statements, which

contain meaningful senses about the syntactic properties of the English verbs.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The epithet of verb performance gained by the students in their essays was found through calculation of the difference between accuracy and inaccuracy within the syntactic properties. The examples of soft data (students' essays) as follows represent the epithet of verb performance.

Table 1. Syntactic Properties of the Verb Performance

Code No	Problematic Issues of Verbs	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Mean
		%	%	%	%	%
A	TENSE	26.82	29.66	27.82	27.00	27.83
(1)	Lexical Verg	26.04	30.52	26.58	22.92	26.52
	- Present	26.04	32.55	27.37	21.64	26.90
	- Past	-1.74	-0.73	-0.92	-1.41	-1.20
	- Future	1.73	-0.31	0.13	2.29	0.71
(2)	Non Lexical Verb	28.58	27.80	30.50	35.96	30.71
	- Present	33.73	29.39	32.77	31.71	32.40
	- Past	-1.36	-2.55	-1.97	1.68	-1.05
	- Future	-0.79	0.96	-0.28	0.56	0.11
B	ASPECT	21.06	15.54	24.84	24.58	21.51
(1)	Progressive	-0.23	-0.42	-0.50	-0.25	-0.35
	- Continucus Tenses	-0.23	-0.42	-0.50	-0.25	-0.35
(2)	Perfective	-1.61	-0.53	-0.51	-0.99	-0.91
	- Perfect Tenses	-1.61	-0.53	-0.51	-0.99	-0.91
(3)	Perfective-Progressive	-1.12	-0.10	-0.08	-0.08	-0.10
	- Perfect Cont Tenses	0.00	-0.10	-0.08	-0.08	-0.07
(4)	Non.(Perf.Prog)	23.01	16.60	25.93	25.89	22.86
	- Simple Tenses	23.01	16.60	25.93	25.89	22.86
C	VOICE	-71.22	-43.66	-17.64	-10.34	-35.72
(1)	Active	26.82	29.66	27.82	27.00	27.83
(2)	Passive	-71.22	-43.66	-17.64	-10.34	-35.72
	- Present	-48.78	-45.07	-14.12	-10.34	-29.58
	- Past	-10.20	1.40	-2.35	0.00	-2.79
	- Future	-12.24	0.00	-1.17	2.30	-2.78
D	MOOD	27.56	38.18	34.60	38.18	34.64
(1)	Finite Verb	26.30	39.16	32.22	31.02	32.18
	- Indicative	24.94	38.30	27.78	27.58	29.65
	- Subjunctive	1.05	1.10	3.67	2.69	1.88
	- Imperstive	0.31	0.39	0.77	0.60	0.52
(2)	Non-Finite Verb	32.08	33.58	43.02	61,26	42.69
	- Infinitive	29.17	27.01	25.00	38.70	29.97
	- Participle	-14.89	7.08	18.00	22.76	8.24
TOTAL		23.82	28.16	28.80	30.18	27.74

[37] I **[am]** the youngest sister in my family. (L 1: CR 45: IS 17 = 33.73%, 39 = 26.58%, 57 = 6.57%)

[38] And now I also **[study and have]** a job in one department store.
(L 2: CR 88: IS 2 = 33.43%, 39 = 16.60%, 56 = 20.89%)

[39] Beside that, magazine and newspaper **[can be involve]** as information media.
(L 3: CR 628: IS 43 = -7.06%, 39 = 27.43%, 60 = 0.61%)

[40] As our conclusion that today the government of Indonesia **[has done]** some efforts [to increase] the quantity and quality of education. (L 4: CR 499: IS 4 = -0.39%, 31 = -0.58%, 61 = 0.00%, 89 = 38.26%).

The epithet of performance gained in the students' essays is elaborated in the following tables. Table 1 below contains detailed information of the syntactic properties of verb. Table 2 contains brief information of verb performance that the students have treated in their essays.

The epithet of verb performance is designated by whether or not the differences between accuracy and inaccuracy are given minus markers. These markers designate that the students' essays contain inaccurate properties of the English verbs more than the accurate ones (inaccuracy > accuracy), or vice versa. Based on the results of mean analyses, it can be stated that the students have got better performance of the English verbs about certain constituents, but they still fail to get better performance for the other certain constituents. The representative examples below will illustrate the students' success or failure to gain better performance in their essays:

- (1) The failure has happened to the production of voice (passive tenses), i.e. the loss is -35.72%, but the success of verb tenses with 27.83% has been obtained in active constructions.
- (2) Only level 3 students produce inaccurate present continuous passive voice (-2.35%), but the other levels do not do any.
- (3) The students from all levels do not try to make past continuous and future perfect tenses of passive voice (0.00%).
- (4) The students have succeeded in producing non-(perfective-progressive) aspects (22.86%), but they do different performance in other types of aspects, i.e. progressive (-0.35%), perfective (-0.91%), and perfective-progressive (-0.10%).
- (5) The success of verb production was gained better in non-finite verbs than in finite verbs, i.e. (42.49% > 32.42%).

Further, detailed information given in table 1 above can be capsulated for the sake of focus. The main headings have been recovered in table 2 below. Then, the line chart type of graphic will follow the table.

The starting point of verb voice happens below the zero axis and it occurs in approximate -70.00%. Its curved line has moved to a better position from previous to the higher positions, so that its mean of percentage rate becomes -35.72%. The performance of passive verb tenses treated by the students indicates a serious problem that this matter should be noticed for its improvements. Unlike with passive ones, the curved lines of active verb tenses treated by all levels occurs above the zero axis, or even above 20.00%, and the mean is indicated by the performance of 27.83%.

The syntactic problems of aspect have been treated well, especially when we consider what they have treated in the verb voice. The performance product mean of aspect is 21.83%. And then, the syntactic problems of verb moods, which mainly consist of finite verb and non-finite verb, are both produced progressively, i.e. 32.18% and 42.49%, respectively.

Table 2. Recapitulation of Syntactic Properties of the Verb Performance

Code No	Problematic Issues of Verbs	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Mean
		%	%	%	%	%
A	TENSE	26.82	29.66	27.82	27.00	27.83
[1]	Lexical Verb	26.04	30.52	26.58	22.92	26.52
[2]	Non-Lexical Verb	28.58	27.80	30.50	35.96	30.71
B	ASPECT	21.06	15.54	24.84	24.58	21.51
[1]	Progressive	-0.23	-0.42	-0.50	-0.25	-0.35
[2]	Perfective	-1.61	-0.53	-0.51	-0.99	-0.91
[3]	Perfective-Progressive	-0.12	-0.10	-0.08	-0.08	-0.10
[4]	Non-(Perf-Prog)	23.01	16.60	25.93	25.89	22.86
C	VOICE	-71.22	-43.66	-17.64	-10.34	-35.72
[1]	Active	26.82	29.66	27.82	27.00	27.83
[2]	Passive	-71.22	-43.66	-17.64	-10.34	-35.72
D	MOOD	27.56	38.18	34.60	38.18	34.63
[1]	Finite Verb	26.30	39.16	32.22	31.02	32.18
[2]	Non-Finite Verb	32.08	33.58	43.02	61.26	42.49
SYNTACTIC PROPERTIES		1.06	9.93	17.41	19.86	12.06

Then, the graphic (Figure 1) shows the flows from previous to the next levels.

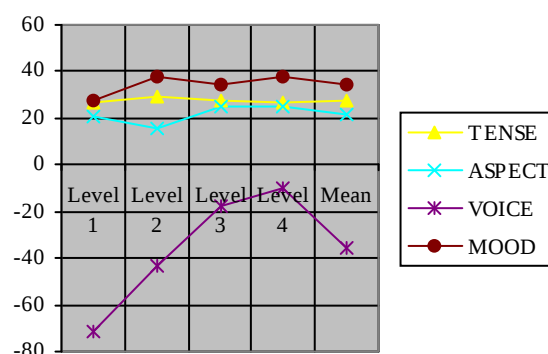


Figure 1. Syntactic Properties of the Verb Performance

Based on the mean percentages, the significant points of views dealing with the students' per-

formance of the English verbs can be generalized as the abstract statements as follows:

- (1) The lexical verb tenses treated by the students in their essays are produced profitably (26.52%).
- (2) The non-lexical verb tenses treated by the students in their essays are produced better than lexical verb ones (30.71%: 26.52%).
- (3) The progressive aspect treated by the students in their essays is produced in loss (-0.35%).
- (4) The perfective aspect treated by the students in their essays is produced in loss (-0.91%).
- (5) The perfective-progressive aspect treated by the students in their essays is produced in loss (-0.10%).
- (6) The non-perfective and non-progressive aspects treated by the students in their essays are best produced profitably of all the other three aspects (22.86%).
- (7) The active voice treated by the students in their essays is produced profitably (27.83%).
- (8) The passive voice treated by the students in their essays is produced in serious loss (-35.72%).
- (9) The finite verb mood treated by the students in their essays is produced profitably (32.18%).
- (10) The non-finite verb mood treated by the students in their essays is produced better than finite verb mood (42.49%: 32.18%).
- (11) The syntactic properties of verb tenses are produced better than those of verb aspects (27.83%: 21.51%).
- (12) The syntactic properties of verb moods are produced better than those of verb tenses (34.63%: 27.83%).

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

In relation to the implications of this study, the ways of syntactic properties of the English verbs treated by the students in their essays are concluded as follows. The profiles of equilibriums of diverse constituents between accuracy and inaccuracy discovered in the students' essays indicate that the inaccurate entities of verbs are much more treated rather than the accurate ones. The inaccurate syntactic properties of the English verbs treated by the level 1 students of English departments in their essays are repeatedly done in the following levels, and even though some constituents are decreasing, but some others have happened to be increasing. This is one of the emergences of a performance analysis to discover the equilibriums between accuracy and inaccuracy, even though the type of this

analysis needs pluralistic capabilities to do massive work.

The diverse constituents of the English verbs on syntactic properties (i.e. tense, aspect, voice, and mode with its indicators) coin the annotations of what the students have gained and what they have not, so that the classifications of performance of the English verbs are weak (mood with 34.63%), weaker (tense with 27.83 % and aspect with 21.51%), and weakest (voice with -35.72%).

The epithet of performance products of the English verbs indicates that most of the syntactic properties of verbs still cannot be used as the entry behaviour to accept the next materials before getting a review or a remedial work; otherwise the sequences of requirements to achieve the expected behaviour will not be able to satisfy the next objectives. Therefore, the entry behaviour in the teaching and learning processes is essential to consider as a definite base before going on to the next substances of language materials.

Suggestions

The following suggestions are referred to solutions of the problematic issues of the English verbs. The English department students should be aware of diverse constituents of the syntactic properties of the English verbs that have special grammar systems and functions as they are very essential in learning English because no clauses can be produced in either written or spoken discourses without the entities of verbs.

It is suggested that the students need to develop their English verbs. In this connection, the probability to think of the students' restricted repertoires of the English verbs, for these will cause their failures to do their tasks in language performance. Therefore, the instructional aims in lesson plan should be integrated.

The language instructors of English are suggested that they consider the students' entry behaviour that enables them to give review, feedback, or even remedial work before continuing the next substances of instructional materials because the evidence indicates that repeated inaccuracy of students' verb products have been treated from the previous to the next levels.

The provision of language curriculum and the making of syllabus for academic and administrative affairs must be done in an appropriate setting. Decision makers in universities, especially in English departments, are necessary to notice the evidence on educational environments, such as students' circumstances, lecturers' interests in subjects, language

curriculums, syllabuses and references of subjects, time allocations of subjects with their lecturers, and the requirements of output with the work field.

To the language researchers, they do researches on other word classes, like adjectives and adverbs,

but especially nouns that have closed relationships with the problematic issues of verbs. It is also suggested that they do researches on other language skills with the aids of a performance analysis.

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