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Investigating Elementary School Pupils' Proficiency in Mastering English Vocabulary

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Abstract

English has been taught at elementary schools as one of the local content subjects. It is necessary to study English from an early age in order to achieve good mastery in it. To master English means to master the four skills in it and also the language aspects, including vocabulary. As one of the language aspects, vocabulary plays an important role in language learning. This study reports on pupils' proficiency in mastering English vocabulary after three years of studying in elementary school. The writer chose 55 grade-four pupils of SD Methodist Banda Aceh as a sample for this study. They were given a vocabulary test related to reading and writing skills consisting of 26 items. The test was to be done in 20 minutes. After calculating the data, it was found that the mean score ($\bar{x}$) of the pupils was 69.5, with the highest score at 92.3 and the lowest score at 26.9. More than 50% of the pupils could answer the questions correctly in less than 20 minutes. Only 4 out of the 55 pupils answered the questions less than 50% correctly and no one answered 100% correct. According to these results, this study showed that the pupils achieved good proficiency in vocabulary.

Keywords: Teaching English to young learners, vocabulary, reading, and writing.

1. INTRODUCTION

We all know and realize how important English is in our lives nowadays. This language has a significant status in the world's communication since it is a global language and is used to communicate with other nations. Kral (1994) revealed that language is a form of communication among individuals in a specific social context and also a way of thinking and processing information. To master English means to master all skills in it, namely productive skills (speaking and writing) and receptive skills (reading and listening) as well as the language aspects such as vocabulary,

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pronunciation, and grammar. By mastering the language skills and the language aspects, someone will be able to communicate actively in English in both spoken and written forms.

To have a good achievement in mastering English, it is necessary to study it from an early age. The teaching of English to young children has become important in recent years. Setiono (1999), quoting from Asher and García (1969), said that children have the greatest probability of attaining near-native pronunciation when they start studying from six years old or younger. Furthermore, they mentioned that children may make mistakes in learning English but they will be corrected through a trial and error process. They also added that younger children are far more successful at memorizing vocabulary and pronouncing new words in a foreign language.

Vocabulary, as one of the language aspects, plays an important role because it is needed to build up other language skills. It is a fundamental aspect of language acquisition. The more words someone knows, the more ideas he or she can verbalize. On the contrary, the less vocabulary someone has, the lower his or her ability to understand and express ideas. Furthermore, Sawardi, et al. (1991) stated that words are the medium of communication, even of communication to oneself. We think with words as we write them, and neither thinking nor writing can be efficient unless the words are accurate.

Nowadays, English has been introduced at elementary schools in Indonesia as one of the local content subjects. This means that it is not an obligatory subject at elementary school. It has been taught at some elementary schools in Banda Aceh; including SD (*Sekolah Dasar* or elementary school) Methodist Banda Aceh where English has been introduced to the pupils since they were in grade one. Therefore, the writer may assume that the pupils of SD Methodist are acquainted with English because they have started studying English at an early age.

Based on the above discussions, the writer wanted to find out the proficiency level of the pupils in SD Methodist in learning English, especially their achievement in vocabulary, after three years of studying by giving them a vocabulary test.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Teaching English to Young Children

Teaching English to young children has become important in recent years. Setiono (1999) said that English language learning must be started from an early age because language learning plays an important role in language acquisition, at least in phonological acquisition. He also added that children have the greatest probability of attaining near-native pronunciation when they are six years old or younger.

There are three aspects that should be considered in teaching English to young children namely the teacher, the length of the lessons, and the activities used in the classroom. One of the successful keys in learning depends on the teacher. It is believed that teaching English to young children will give a good effect if the teacher knows the appropriate methods and techniques to teach young children and to motivate them in order to have a positive attitude towards English. According to Kral (1994), the teacher is the person specially trained to guide and help the student, select appropriate learning

materials, and create a positive classroom environment. Thus, the teacher plays an important role in the teaching learning process.

In addition, Setiono (1999) stated that the fact that children feel bored and discouraged in learning English may stem from those three factors mentioned above (e.g. the teacher, the length of time of the lesson, and the classroom activities). The first factor is that an English teacher may lack knowledge of pedagogy for the subject for teaching children and, thus, be inadequately prepared to teach the subject matter. In addition, in conducting English classes, an English teacher tends to put emphasis on memorizing. It is common that our education system for various disciplines is heavily reliant on book learning and students are expected to memorize the materials provided in their books. Moreover, many English teachers still adopt an authoritarian form of education. The atmosphere in the class is teacher centred. Students are rarely given opportunities to interact with their peers or their teachers. Situations like this must be avoided in teaching English to young children.

The second factor is the length of each lesson. The length of time that the English teacher needs to teach young children is different from those who are adults. Halliwell (1992) revealed that the appropriate length of time for children in learning English is about 45 minutes a day. This is also supported by Holden (1980) who stated that children cannot concentrate on one thing for a long period because children are easily overloaded with experiences and information. They usually get bored and lose concentration faster than adults. A child's concentration span increases as he/ she grows older.

The last factor is classroom activities. The activities in the classroom for children learning English are different from those for adults. So, the teacher should plan and design suitable activities for the children in the class. Commonly, young children like to study by playing. Scott and Ytreberg (1990) divided the young language learner into two main groups: the five to seven years old and the eight to ten years old. According to them, some criteria of the five to seven years old are that the children love to play and learn best when they are enjoying themselves; they know that the word is governed by rules and they may not always understand the rules, but they know that they have to obey the rules; they have a very short attention and concentration span; and they cannot decide for themselves on what to learn. While, the characteristics of the eight to ten years old are that they can ask question all the time; they are able to make some decisions about their own learning; they can decide about what they like and do not like doing; and they are able to work with others and learn from others.

Based on the above criteria, the teacher, therefore, should be able to create the activities that are appropriate for the children such as playing games, telling stories, and singing songs. Furthermore, Brumfit (1991, p. vii) agreed that learning language at the earlier age gives some advantages because the brain is more adaptable before puberty than after, and that acquisition of languages is possible without self-consciousness at an early age.

Children have fewer negative attitudes to foreign languages and cultures than adults and, consequently, they are better motivated than adults. Their language learning is more closely integrated with real communication because it depends more on the immediate physical environment than adult language. They devote vast quantities of time to language learning, compared with adults, and they are better because they do more of it.

2.2 Children's Language Acquisition

Children's first words bring joy and amazement to their parents. Learning to talk seems so natural and children learn so quickly and very soon they can express an entire idea. Gleason (1961) stated that the child's acquisition of his native language is not dependent on any special tutoring. In this case, the children who become fluent speakers do not depend on their parents only but they can also pick up a language by playing with other children or by people around them. In addition, Fisher and Terry (1977) said that language acquisition results from a complex combination of biological and environmental factors. In other words, environment is an important factor that bears children to acquire the language.

Furthermore, Gleason (1961) believed that a child cannot invent a language from scratch. This means that language cannot be acquired without interaction among people. Language cannot develop. In children who grew up in the wilderness in isolation or in isolation from language use, for instance if raised by a deaf-mute or shut off from the world except for feeding, In relation to language acquisition, Brumfit (1991) believed that all learners learn a language very broadly along the same route or order, whether as their first or second language. The first process in acquiring a language is by recognizing the objects both concrete and abstract then followed by learning the vocabulary.

Vocabulary growth is based on the experiences of the learner. They must be associated with meaning in order to be useful for communication. Quandt (1977), as he quoted from Petty, Herold and Stoll (1968), explained how vocabulary is acquired. The child first has an experience. As a result, he or she learns a word or some words to associate with the experience. As new perceptions of the experience are gained, and as new experiences occur, each new perception is added to earlier perceptions. As a child assimilates these new perceptions, he or she must accommodate them with an understanding of previous experiences. This composite is then associated with words whose meaning are already known as well as with new words that are spoken or written by another person. Probably the child learns most vocabulary by making his or her own association between words and the actions of the persons observed using them. Thus, the experience is a necessary prerequisite to vocabulary growth.

2.3 The Children's Approaches in Learning Vocabulary

Vocabulary plays an important role in language learning. Pahuja (1994) revealed the reasons why it is important to have a good vocabulary since mastering vocabulary may help us to understand the exact meaning of what we say, write, hear, and read; to avoid any misunderstanding in our minds and the reader's mind; to speak and write easily and fluently; to make the speech and writing more interesting and to avoid using confusing words or using words incorrectly.

The word vocabulary has several meanings. Wehmeier and Hornby (2000) have three meanings for the word vocabulary, firstly vocabulary as the total number of words in a language, then as the total number of words used by a person, and finally as a list of the words used in a book or piece of writing. More usually the definition of vocabulary is the total number of words which make up a language (Wehmeier & Hornby, 2000). Consequently, it is clear that vocabulary is the number of words which are very important for one to communicate or represent idea.

Most children have the same approach to learning vocabulary. According to Quandt (1977), there are four types of vocabulary available to a child, they are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening vocabulary normally develops early as the child begins to associate what is heard with existing experiences. It continues to expand, but as the child begins to talk, the second type that is speaking vocabulary is also built. Later, the third and the fourth types of vocabulary, reading and writing, develop simultaneously.

Furthermore, Petty, et al. (1968) divided reading vocabulary into two types: sight vocabulary and meaning vocabulary. Sight vocabulary consists of the words that a reader recognizes because they have become a part of his or her visual memory. When a child sees such words, their pronunciation and basic meaning are rapidly recognized. The other type, that is meaning vocabulary, consists of the words with which an individual can associate meaning when they appear in context.

Moreover, Rafiq (2002), quoting from Kaluger and Kolson (1978), stated that generally there are four kinds of vocabulary acquired by young children, namely understanding vocabulary, speaking vocabulary, reading vocabulary, and writing vocabulary. The understanding vocabulary is the first vocabulary developed by young children since they are able to respond and recognize the words spoken to them by their family before they can talk, read, or write. They are able to do it because they hear the words repeatedly and soon they know the meaning of the words. Fisher and Terry (1977) revealed that every word is essentially a symbol. By understanding the symbol associated with a word, people understand the meaning of the word. For example, the word *water* is meaningful to us because we understand the symbol of water. We have had experiences with water. We swim in water, we drink water, and we do dishes with water. It is an example of concrete symbols and the words associated with them are easier to learn than abstract and intangible ones. For instance, if we want children to understand the symbol of *square* and the word associated with it, we need to show them pictures of squares, have them cut out squares, and perhaps ask them to draw squares. However, the words associated with intangible and emotive symbols such as the word *honest* can be learned by young children through experiences, either direct experience, vicarious experience, or a combination of both. When children have had plenty of experiences related to the symbols of honesty, they will understand the symbol and the word *honest*.

After recognizing the symbol of words, children will have speaking vocabulary. Speaking vocabulary grows rapidly and it is hard to determine the rate of growth of this vocabulary even after the children come to school. The next vocabulary acquired by the children is reading vocabulary. Most of them acquire it when they enter the school in the first grade. Here they learn to apply a new type of symbol, a printed word, and the concept of the word that they have previously acquired. Finally, the children begin to learn the writing vocabulary. The process of acquiring the writing vocabulary occurs when they enter the school where they learn how to produce the printed symbol from the reading vocabulary in written form.

Since vocabulary is an influential factor in learning a language, the teacher should plan and design the materials for students in which they can be motivated to learn. Teaching English to young children is different from teaching teenagers or adults. The first reason is because children easily get bored and change their mood. Therefore, the teacher must be creative to create and provide a variety of activities for children to avoid their getting bored (Klein, 2005, as cited in Fitriana, 2012). Another reason is that

children have a greater motivation compared to adults to do things that appeal to them. It is known that children are interested in games, songs, and stories. Thus, the teacher should provide them with these activities when they are learning English as stated by Scott and Ytreberg (1990) that children love to play and learn best when they are enjoying themselves.

In addition, it seems that providing a media such as using simple and interesting pictures may attract the young children's attention to learn particularly English vocabulary. Suleiman (2002) believed that a picture is an important visual aid and easy to understand. The pictures should be selected properly based on the lessons, for instance, if teachers want to teach vocabulary about food, they can choose pictures of food. Suleiman (2002, p. 28) stated clearly that to achieve a maximal goal, there are some requirements for selecting a picture. These are as follows:

1. Pictures must be good, clear, interesting, easy to understand and big enough for the student to see necessary details.
2. Pictures should be appropriate for the material or problem that is being studied.
3. Pictures must be correct or authentic, meaning that they describe the situation similar to the real condition.
4. Simplicity is important, difficult pictures commonly make children confused about a small part or detail in the picture and then they cannot find the meaning in it.
5. Pictures must be suitable for the level of intelligence of the person who sees them.
6. Colour, even if not important, can increase the value of a picture making it more realistic and stimulate more interest in it from the person that sees it.
7. Comparative size in the picture is preferable.

It is clear that choosing appropriate pictures with suitable requirements as mentioned above in teaching vocabulary may increase the students' motivation to learn English. A study conducted by Fitriana (2012) shows that the vocabulary test given to the fourth grade of elementary school students with and without pictures give significantly different mean scores. The mean score of vocabulary test using pictures was 89.89, whereas the mean score of the test without using pictures was 65.39. It is likely that pictures have a great influence in students' proficiency in mastering English vocabulary.

3. METHOD

The population of this study was the pupils of SD Methodist in Banda Aceh. A number of 55 grade-four pupils were taken as the sample for this study. They were grouped into two classes. English had been introduced to the students since they were in the first grade. There were three class hours a week for the first and second grade students. The third and fourth grade students had two class hours a week. While, the fifth and sixth grade students had only one class hour a week. Each class hour is equivalent to 45 minutes.

The main objective of this study was to test the pupils in order to know their English proficiency, especially in vocabulary. Gronlund (1993) stated the aim of a test as a systematic procedure for measuring the proficiency of a representative sample in performing a learning task. The instrument used in this research was from Cambridge Young Learners English, University of Cambridge-Local Examinations Syndicate. There were three kinds of test of Cambridge Young Learners English, namely Starters

Reading and Writing, Movers Reading and Writing, and Advance Reading and Writing. The writer took the first one because it was assumed to be suitable for the fourth grade pupils of an elementary school. It consisted of 26 items related to vocabulary and the time limit to do the test was 20 minutes. The test was divided into five parts as follows:

Part 1: There were 5 questions in part 1. The directions were look and read, put a tick (v) or a cross (x) in the box.

Part 2: There were 5 questions in part 2. The directions were look and read, write yes or no.

Part 3: It consisted of 5 questions. The directions were look at the pictures, look at the letters, and write the words.

Part 4: There were 6 questions. The directions were read the story, look at the pictures, and write the words.

Part 5: It consisted of 5 questions. The directions were look at the pictures, read the questions, and write one-word answers.

After the scores from the vocabulary test were collected, the writer used some formulas to measure the English proficiency of the pupils as follows:

First, the writer had to change students' raw scores into scores which have a standard base of 100 by using the following formula presented by Capon (1988, p. 49):

$$x = \frac{fc}{fi} \times 100\%$$

Where:

x = score

fc = total correct answers (raw score)

fi = total items

In order to analyze the data, the writer used a relevant statistical technique, which is mean ($\bar{x}$). The mean score ($\bar{x}$) is used to find the average score of the students. Capon (1988, p. 49) presents the following formula for the mean score ($\bar{x}$):

$$(\bar{x}) = \frac{\sum fx}{N}$$

Where:

($\bar{x}$) = mean score

$\sum fx$ = total scores of all students

N = total number of students

Besides the mean score, the writer also used a letter scale to record the proficiency of pupils from SD Methodist in mastering English vocabulary. Arikunto (1987, p. 241) uses a scale table as follows:

Table 1. Letter scale.

Score	Scale	Meaning
80 – 100	A	Very good
66 – 79	B	Good
56 – 65	C	Fair
40 – 55	D	Less
30 – 39	E	Fail

4. FINDINGS

Table 2 presents the students' scores gathered from the test.

Table 2. The students' scores.

<i>Time (minute)</i>	<i>No. of students</i>		<i>Correct answers</i>	<i>Score</i>
5	15	1	24	92.3
		2	23	88.5
		1	22	84.6
		2	21	80.8
		1	20	76.9
		1	19	73.1
		1	18	69.2
		3	17	65.4
		1	16	61.5
		1	13	50
		1	11	42.3
6	8	2	23	88.5
		1	22	84.6
		1	21	80.8
		1	18	69.2
		1	17	65.4
		2	15	57.7
7	2	1	17	65.4
		1	7	26.9
8	1	1	9	34.6
9	1	1	13	50
12	24	3	23	88.5
		4	22	84.6
		2	21	80.8
		6	20	76.9
		1	19	73.1
		1	18	69.2
		2	16	61.5
		1	15	57.7
		2	14	53.8
		2	13	50
14	1	1	16	61.5
15	1	1	14	53.8
16	1	1	11	42.3
18	1	1	14	53.8
Total of students		55	55	

From Table 2 above, we can see that there were various times for students to finish the vocabulary test, ranging from 5 to 18 minutes. Actually, the time given was 20 minutes. There were 15 students (27.2%) who could do the test in 5 minutes. Interestingly, their scores were varied which were from 92.3 (24 correct answers) as the highest to 42.3 (11 correct answers) as the lowest score. Furthermore, there were 8 students (14.5%) who were able to do the test in 6 minutes, with 88.5 (23 correct answers) as the highest score performed by two students and 57.7 (15 correct answers) as the lowest score. Only two students (3.6%) in seven minutes could finish the test with 65.4 (17 correct answers) as the highest score and 26.9 (7 correct answers) as the lowest. Dominantly, the students could finish the test in 12 minutes. There were 24 out

of 55 students or 43.6% who needed 12 minutes to do it. Their scores ranged from 88.5 (23 correct answers) to 50 (13 correct answers). Even, only one student, who got 14 correct answers (score 53.8) needed 18 minutes to do the test.

Table 3 below describes the computation of the pupils' scores and the mean scores in doing the vocabulary test.

Table 3. The computation of the pupils' scores in vocabulary test.

No.	X	F	Fx
1	92.3	1	92.3
2	88.5	7	619.5
3	84.6	6	507.6
4	80.8	5	404
5	76.9	7	538.3
6	73.1	2	146.2
7	69.2	3	207.6
8	65.4	5	327
9	61.5	4	246
10	57.7	3	173.1
11	53.8	4	215.2
12	50	4	200
13	42.3	2	84.6
14	34.6	1	34.6
15	26.9	1	26.9
Total		55	3822.9

From Table 3, we can see that the mode (the score which occurred most often) was 88.5 (23 correct answers) and 76.9 (20 correct answers). Each score was obtained by seven students. Conversely, the highest score (92.3) was obtained by only one student, followed by the lowest score (26.9) which was also obtained by only one student. Specifically, it is clear that there were nine students whose scores ranged between 80 and 100 or scale A (Arikunto, 1987). Their scores were 92.3 (1 student), 88.5 (7 students), 84.6 (6 students), and 80.8 (5 students). However, twelve students who got the score of 76.9 (7 students), 73.1 (2 students) and 69.2 (three students) were in scale B or the score is between 66 and 79. Meanwhile, scale C was achieved by 12 students whose scores were between 56 and 65. There were 10 students who got score the score of 53.8 (4 students), 50 (4 students), and 42.3 (two students) were in scale D. Finally only two students failed the test as their scores were in scale E, which were 34.6 and 26.9.

Based on Table 3, the writer calculated the mean score ($\bar{x}$) of the pupils in general as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 N &= 55 \\
 \sum Fx &= 3822.9 \\
 &= \frac{\sum Fx}{N} \\
 &= \frac{3822.9}{55} \\
 &= 69.5
 \end{aligned}$$

The mean score ($\bar{x}$) is 69.5. This score lies between 66-79. According to Arikunto (1987), this score is as same as level B.

5. DISCUSSION

Based on the findings, we can see that 16.36% (9 out of 55 students) who scored between 80 and 100 had very good proficiency in mastering English vocabulary. Additionally, there were 21.82% of students (12 out of 55 students) who were in level B, which means that their English proficiency in mastering vocabulary was good. Interestingly, the same number of students, i.e. 12 students (21.82%), also achieved level C, meaning that they had fair English proficiency in mastering vocabulary. There were 10 students (18.18%) who had poor proficiency in mastering English vocabulary, with scores between 40 and 55. Finally, two students (3.64%) failed as they had the lowest scores, which were in scale E (34.6 and 26.9). From the findings, we can assume that time did not influence their scores. In fact one student who did the test in the shortest time (5 minutes) has the highest score (92.3).

By and large, it seems that the pupils' proficiency in mastering English vocabulary after three years of studying at SD Methodist Banda Aceh was good. More than 50% of pupils could answer the questions quickly and correctly. Also from the results of this research only 4 (four) out of 55 (fifty five) pupils answered the questions less than 50% correctly. However, no one answered 100% correctly. The statistical analysis showed that the mean score ($\bar{x}$) of the pupils was 69.5, with the highest score at 92.3 and the lowest score at 26.5. Based on this finding, it showed that the pupils' average proficiency in mastering English vocabulary was in level B, indicating that their proficiency on English vocabulary achievement was good.

Furthermore, the findings obtained in this study undoubtedly have pedagogical implications for the students, especially in terms of designing the materials and developing appropriate classroom activities for young children. Since vocabulary plays an important role in learning English, course designers and teachers should consider developing appropriate materials and activities for the classroom. The materials and the activities should be varied and interesting to increase the students' motivation to learn English vocabulary. Lightbown and Spada (2006) believed that varying activities, tasks, and materials are able to increase students' motivation.

6. CONCLUSION

As this study only focuses on finding out the elementary school pupils' proficiency in mastering English vocabulary after three years of studying English, the writer concludes that the pupils of SD Methodist had achieved good proficiency in English vocabulary. This was shown by the mean score ($\bar{x}$) found, which was 69.5. The mastery of English vocabulary amongst the pupils differed even though they were in the same grade and at the same school. The higher level or grade the pupil was, the more vocabulary knowledge he/she should get. Therefore the writer suggests that English should be taught at an early age in order to prepare the potential of young generation in the future who are ready to compete in the global era where English plays an important role. The teaching of English to young children should start from a simple step that is vocabulary activity. Thus, the teacher should enrich the pupils with extensive vocabulary. He or she should consider providing various interesting materials leading to interactive and enjoyable classroom activities in teaching English to young learners. The activities such as singing songs, telling stories, playing games, and using colourful

pictures may attract their attention and increase their motivation to learn English, especially vocabulary.

Nonetheless, it is clear that this study also has a number of limitations. Firstly, this study employed only a small number of students as the sample. As a result, the findings may not be generalized to other students at other schools. Also, the test given to the students in this study consisted of only a limited number of words that cannot measure the whole vocabulary that they have attained after three years of studying English at elementary school. Therefore, further research with a larger scale sample and a larger vocabulary test could be conducted in the future.

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The Difficulties Faced by Students in Producing Free-Writing: A Study at STKIP Bina Bangsa Getsempena

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Abstract

Writing is a means of communication to convey meaning as well as a medium for self-expression and self-assessment and also for teacher-assessment. In the tertiary context, writing even has more complex meanings because of its social context and epistemological issues of knowledge. This study was conducted to identify errors and mistakes made in free-writing by students at STKIP Bina Bangsa Getsempena and to investigate the reasons they faced numerous difficulties in producing good free-writing, to investigate the students' opinions towards the activity of writing in general, and also the comments of their lecturers on their assignments. 18 free-writing assignments were collected from 18 students and a questionnaire was also distributed to strengthen the data obtained from the writings. The written assignments were then analyzed by using the form feedback framework, in terms of conventional grammatical errors, adapted from Ashwell (2000). The findings showed six categories of grammar that were often misused in the students' free-writing, namely agreement/verb-tense, spelling, articles/determiners/plurals, lexical choice, pronoun and preposition/collocation. The results from the questionnaires revealed that the main obstacles faced by the students in producing free-writing were their lack of ideas/difficulties in organizing ideas as well as their problems with grammar.

Keywords: Free-writing, form feedback, grammatical errors, writing implication.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

It has been identified that students experience some difficulties in improving their writing ability, particularly at the tertiary level. Some students are unsuccessful in this

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subject as writing is considered a complex skill, especially writing in English (Waters & Waters, 1995, p. 90). Richards and Renandya (2006, p. 493) say that the difficulty lies not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in translating these ideas into a readable text. To become accustomed to writing, therefore, students should arrange more time to practice writing. Free-writing is one type of writing that can be used to improve skills in writing.

Cho (2003, p. 166) asserts that good writers make use of multiple revisions in order to improve their text whereas poor writers strive to get it right at the first attempt. It is clear that teachers' feedback certainly plays an important role in motivating students to write better. From the comments made the students learned how to fix their writing to avoid making the same mistakes again. This is pertinent to what Lea and Street (1998, p. 162) point out that students knew that variations of form existed, but admitted that their real writing difficulties lay in trying to gauge the deeper levels of variation in writing and how to set about using them.

It is, moreover, expected that teacher's commentaries on students' writing should be one of the best contributions to assist their writing to be better. This is because the comments of their teachers on the students' writing provide supplemental written information to guide the expectations of their writing. This study, consequently, is an attempt to identify common mistakes made by the students in their free-writing, to identify the reasons for their difficulties in producing an error free text, and to investigate the students' opinions towards the activity of writing in general and also towards their lecturers' comments on their free writing assignments.

1.2 Research Questions

A number of research questions have been developed for this study. They are as follows:

1. What kinds of errors/mistakes are found in students' free-writing in English at STKIP Bina Bangsa Getsempena?
2. Why do the students face numerous difficulties in producing quality free-writing?
3. What are the students' opinions towards writing as an activity in general and what are their lecturers' comments on the quality of their free-writing assignments?

1.3 Research Objectives

Based on the questions above, this study aims:

1. To identify the errors/mistakes made by students in English free-writing exercises at STKIP Bina Bangsa Getsempena.
2. To investigate the reasons for their difficulties in producing quality free-writing in English.
3. To investigate the students' opinions towards the activity of writing in general and their lecturers' comments on the quality of their English free-writing assignments.

1.4 The Choice of Participant

A number of 18 students in their 3rd year of study at STKIP Bina Bangsa Getsempena were the participants for this study. Free-writing assignments from these students were the samples taken as they met particular criteria for the purpose of this

research. The researcher of this study is a lecturer at this institute and, therefore, is familiar with the context of this study; thus the researcher has easy access to obtain the data needed as well as the convenience aspect for doing the research. Dörnyei (2003, p. 72) calls this procedure the *convenience* or *opportunity sample* which means that “an important criterion of sample selection is the convenience for the researcher”. It is hoped that this study will have some beneficial impacts for the students and also for the institution as well.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Difficulties in the World of Writing

As writing involves more than just producing words and sentences, the students' written language communication skills are critical in clearly expressing their knowledge and understanding Brown (2010, p. 277). Paying attention to linguistics is pivotal to generating quality writing which represents the success of language learning procedures. Harmer (2004, p. 31) also emphasizes that writing encourages students to focus on accurate language use and provokes the development of language as the writers endeavour to resolve the problems which the writing puts into their minds.

The difficulties of writing usually emerged starting from the first words that are written. Difficulties are made worse during the choosing and generating of ideas followed by organizing ideas and selecting words/vocabularies to start writing. The problems do not stop at this point, as they continue when the student has to write in the context of a certain discipline, for instance, politics, economy, education and many others. This is because the understanding of written language can be different amongst different disciplines; therefore the writer should be careful in the use of his/her language. Furthermore, writing becomes more difficult when it is written as a second or foreign language, like Indonesian students writing in English. Schleppegrell (2004) notes that it is not surprising that some second language writers, even as third and fourth year university students still have difficulty with the technical and scientific writing required in their field of study.

Apart from the problems above, cultural values also play an important role in writing since they influence the way of writing itself. It is undeniable that the cultural issues cannot be separated from the writing aspects. Shields (2010, p. 6) points out that to be successful, the academic culture including behaviour, value and attitudes should be adapted to the writing. Even though it is little emphasized, the aim is that the students should convey their ideas clearly in their writing in order to produce a communicable and readable text. Brown (2010, p. 183) further indicates that this approach requires certain organisational patterns in order to create a typical written structure, characteristic of the language itself.

2.2 Free Writing

According to Oshima and Hogue (2007, p. 35), free-writing is a pre writing technique in which you write without stopping for a specific amount of time. This means that the students are free to express any ideas in writing. They are allowed to write freely without limitations to genre, context and topics. As one of various pre-

writing techniques, in addition, free-writing may be used as a medium to familiarize students with writing itself, since the students practice writing freely at those times. In fact, the more students write, the more fluent they will become as writers.

Constructing quality writing requires certain processes to be accomplished. These processes are necessary in order to meet the needs of the writing concept. Oshima and Hogue (2007, p. 15) state that the processes of writing have roughly four steps, which are to create ideas, organize the ideas, write a rough draft and polish the draft. On the other hand, Segal and Pavlik (1996) divide the steps of writing into seven steps; namely exploring ideas, organizing ideas, developing cohesion and style, writing the first draft, practice editing, editing writing, and writing the second draft.

2.3 The Lecturer's Comment/Feedback

Ways of grading students' writing differ amongst lecturers, based on the purposes of the tasks assigned. The comment/feedback from lecturers is one of the techniques used to improve the students' work. The comments provided are an essential element in order to improve the quality of the writing produced. Dealing with this, Huot (2002, p. 165) says that assessment is needed to assist students to learn to work as writers and to picture writing assessments as a necessary, theoretical, authentic and practical technique to be taught to students in order to improve their writing activities. Thus, assessments given should be useful for the students to improve their writing.

In terms of its purpose, the lecturer's comment/feedback should be a beneficial aspect for both the teachers/lecturers and students. The assessment is also used to measure the success of the teaching process. Through the assessment, it can be detected whether the teaching learning process has been completed successfully. Mickan (2003a) states that the assessment procedure involves interpretative practices resulting in variations in candidates' responses to the same prompts and in scoring variations.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

3.1.1 Scope of Study

This research focused on identifying errors in students' free-writing, investigating the reasons for any difficulties in generating free-writing, and their opinions towards writing as an activity in general and comments of their lecturers on the students' free-writing. The sample population for this study was 18 students in their 3rd year of study (fifth semester) in the English Language Department at STKIP Bina Bangsa Getsempena Banda Aceh. The researcher collected a sample of writing from each student which had been marked by their lecturers as data for this study. These writings were then graded using certain formulae.

3.1.2 The Theoretical Framework

The framework used in this research was adapted from Ashwell (2000). He categorizes the lecturer's feedback based on errors found in the students' writing,

namely feedback, related to grammatical errors, spelling, verb tenses, and many others. The percentage of comments provided based on each category is then calculated. This is to identify the possible mistakes that may occur in the students' writings overall and also to rate which category of grammatical conventions that are most often wrong. This study thus followed Ashwell's procedures for analysis.

3.2 Data Collection

3.2.1 Research Instrument 1: The Students' Writing

The researcher collected students' free writing assignments with the lecturers' comments on them. These documents were in both soft and hard copies. The mistakes made were recognized to find out the category of errors that appeared most frequently. Each free-writing assignment from each student contained at least 150 words.

3.2.2 Research Instrument 2: Questionnaire

A questionnaire was used to obtain data about the reasons for the students' difficulties in producing error free free-writing based on their experience, as well as their opinions towards writing activities in general and their lecturers' comments on their free writing. The questionnaire was divided into two sections; firstly, the difficulties experienced by students in producing free writing, and their opinions towards writing activities in general and lastly their lecturers' comments on their free writing. Ears (2004, p. 244) explains that a questionnaire is a document containing questions and other types of items designed to solicit information appropriate for analysis. Hence, this study provided 10 closed-ended questions to be answered by the students by circling one of the options available. Each question has 4 (four) options, one of which must be chosen for the answer.

3.3 Data Analysis

3.3.1 The Students' Writing

In analyzing the students' writing, the researcher used an adaptation of Ashwell's study as mentioned above in section 3.1.2. The study focuses on data from the forms, an example of which can be seen in Table 1 that follows below:

Table 1. Main types of errors found (adapted from Ashwell, 2000, p. 233).

<i>Type of error</i>	<i>Examples (possible corrections)</i>	<i>Estimated proportions (%)</i>
Lexical choice	- I am a waitress in a <u>tavern</u> [→ bar?] - <u>From</u> I was a child I thought my family's different [→ since?] - ... They do <u>home service</u>. [→ they help around the house?]	19
Articles /determiners /plurals	- ... He worked at ___ law office in Kobe [→ a?] - ... but he changed <u>the</u> work [→ his] - "what <u>a</u> beautiful plants!" [→ delete a or s]	18

Table 1 continued...

Spelling/typos	- Grasses [→ glasses] - Stubboun [→ stubborn]	13
Prepositions	- ... was born <u>at</u> Yokohama [→ in] - ... his place of work <u>the</u> Metropolitan Government Office [→ in/at]	10
Punctuation /sentence and clause boundaries	- ... and they come back home at late. So, they have a little time to spend with their family. [→... late, so...?] - But he and I have a little time to spend together. Because I go out every day. [→... together, because...]	8
Agreement	- They never threat <u>his</u> wife as ... [→... their wives...?] - He care_ for us very much [→ cares]	6
Verb/tense	- I <u>was introduced</u> his office <u>by him</u> [→ he showed me around his office?] (compounded errors) - He comes home after family <u>eat</u> dinner [→ has eaten]	5

For this study, checking the students' writing and categorizing them into the type of errors based on their lecturer's comments, the researcher revised some of the categories above to suit the context of this study. Accordingly, agreement and verb-tense preposition and collocation as well as pronoun were the additional categories for this study.

3.3.2 Questionnaire

After analysing the data from the questionnaires, the percentage frequency of each type of error was then calculated using the formula given by Anas (2008, p. 43):

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

Where:

- P = percentage of each type of error
F = frequency/number of each type of error
N = the total number of errors
100% = constant value for percentages

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 The Analysis of Students' Writing

This section presents the findings in relation to the mistakes found in the students' writing. 18 free-writing assignments, each from a different student, were analyzed. The results are as follow.

Student 1 (S1) free-writing

Various errors were found in S1's free-writing under the title *Life in boarding school*. Overall, a total of 15 were found in the agreement/verb-tense, spelling and article/determiners/plurals categories. Most of the errors were in the agreement/verb-tense category with a total of 10 (66.7%) errors. They were followed by spelling and article/determiners/plurals categories with a total of 3 (20%) and 2 (13.3%) errors respectfully

Student 2 (S2) free-writing

The title of S2's free-writing was *Shopping*. 22 errors were identified in the areas of spelling, article/determiners/plurals, preposition/collocation, agreement/verb-tense and lexical choice. The least number of errors was in the lexical choice category, in which only 1 (4.6%) error was found. Errors in misuse of preposition/collocation and agreement/verb-tense categories occurred 3 times (13.5%) and twice (9%) respectfully, whilst in the article/determiners/plurals category there were 4 (18%) errors. Spelling had the most errors, 12 (54.5%) errors in all. The spelling category of errors seemed to be the main difficulty experienced by S2.

Student 3 (S3) free-writing

S3 experienced difficulties in only 2 categories of errors in her free-writing under the title *My favourite country*. The mistakes appeared in the areas of spelling and of agreement/verb-tense categories with a total of 2 (50%) errors in each of the 2 categories. Overall, the content of S3's free-writing was quite good and well-organized since only a few mistakes were identified.

Student 4 (S4) free-writing

Under the title, *My mother*, 14 errors were identified in S4's free-writing with a total of 9 (64.3%) errors, agreement/verb-tense errors were the most frequent. Following this, spelling errors were the second highest with 3 (21.4%) errors. Article/determiners/plurals and lexical choice categories had the least number of errors with 1 (7.1%) error in each category.

Student 5 (S5) free-writing

Curriculum 2013 was the title of S5's free-writing and 13 errors in the various grammatical conventions were noted. These mistakes were in the areas of agreement/verb-tense, article/determiners/plurals, spelling, lexical choice and preposition/collocation. The last 3 categories had the least number of errors in the writing, only 1 (7.7%) error each. With a total of 2 (15.3%) errors, article/determiners/plurals category was the second most common error found in the writing. In fact, S5 also faced the most difficulty in applying agreement/verb-tense in writing similar to S1's and S3's cases, in which most errors occurred with a total of 8 (61%).

Student 6 (S6) free-writing

Reading S6's free-writing with the title *Seminar*, 13 errors were found. These mistakes were found in 5 different categories; they were agreement/verb-tense, spelling, lexical choice, article/determiners/plurals and preposition/collocation. Similar to other students, most mistakes were in the agreement/verb-tense, with 7 (53.9%) errors. This was

followed by spelling and lexical choice errors with a total of 2 (15.3%) errors in each. The least errors appeared in spelling and lexical choice, with only 1 (7.8%) error in each.

Student 7 (S7) free-writing

Agreement/verb-tense and spelling were the 2 types of errors found in S7's free-writing, under the title, *The function of literature*. 7 (87.5%) errors were found in the agreement/verb-tense category, which was followed by the spelling category with only 1 (12.5%) error.

Student 8 (S8) free-writing

S8 had very few errors in his writing titled, *Walking alone*. Only 2 (66.7%) errors in the preposition/collocation category and only 1 (33.3%) error was found in the agreement/verb-tense category.

Student 9 (S9) free-writing

There were 6 errors in 2 categories found in S9's free-writing: spelling and article/determiners/plurals category errors, with 3 (50%) errors in each category. The title of the free-writing was *How to be a good Muslim*.

Student 10 (S10) free-writing

15 errors in 4 categories [e.g. article/determiners/plurals, agreement/verb-tense, lexical choice and spelling categories] were found in S10's free-writing with the title *Dream*. The most errors were in the area of article/determiners/plurals, with a total of 5 (33.1%) errors. The category of agreement/verb-tense and lexical choice had a total of 4 (26.6%) errors each. Spelling was the least with only 2 (13.3%) errors.

Student 11 (S11) free-writing

Errors in categories of agreement/verb-tense, lexical choice, spelling, article/determiners/plurals and preposition/collocation were detected in S11's free-writing under the title *Global warming*. 4 (50%) errors were noted in the area of agreement/verb-tense. This was the highest category of mistakes in this writing. Only 1 (12.5%) error occurred in each of the other 4 categories listed above.

Student 12 (S12) free-writing

S12 had 16 errors in lexical choice, agreement/verb-tense, pronoun and article/determiners/plurals in her writing, under the title *Apple and orange are alike*. Lexical choice had the highest number of errors detected with a total of 6 (35.2%) errors. Article/determiners/plurals category had only 1 (5.9%) error. Agreement/verb-tense and pronoun categories had 5 (29.4%) and 4 (23.5%) errors respectively.

Student 13 (S13) free-writing

22 errors in 3 categories: agreement/verb-tense, articles/determiners/plurals and spelling, were found in S13's free-writing under the title *Teaching method*. 15 (68.2%) errors were found in the agreement/verb-tense category. Articles/determiners/plurals category had 5 (27.7%) errors. Spelling was the category with the least errors with a total of only 2 (9.1%) errors.

Student 14 (S14) free-writing

Articles/determiners/plurals was the category with the most errors found in S14's free writing, entitled *Teaching verb*, with a total of 5 (41.8%) errors. Agreement/verb-tense and preposition/collocation categories had 3 (25%) and 2 (16.6%) errors respectively. Spelling and lexical choice had the least errors with only 1 (8.3%) error in each category making a total of 12 errors overall.

Student 15 (S15) free-writing

S15 writing under the title *Refreshing* had a total of 11 errors in applying agreement/verb-tense, spelling, articles/determiners/plurals, preposition/collocation and lexical choice. 4 (36.3%) errors were found in the area of agreement/verb-tense. The misuse of articles/determiners/plurals and spelling errors totalled 3 (27.3%) and 2 (18.2%) errors respectively. Preposition/collocation and lexical choice categories had the least number of errors with only 1 (9.1%) error in each.

Student 16 (S16) free-writing

S16's free writing entitled *Nature of gold*, had 15 errors in the 5 following categories: agreement/verb-tense, articles/determiners/plurals, spelling, preposition/collocation and lexical choice. Agreement/verb-tense had the highest number of errors with a total of 6 (40%) errors, followed by articles/determiners/plurals category with 4 (26.7%) errors. 2 (13.3%) errors each occurred in the spelling and preposition/collocation categories. The lexical choice category had only 1 (6.7%) error.

Student 17 (S17) free-writing

Under the title - *The betel leaves for health benefits*, S17's free-writing can be categorized as a good one, since only 2 mistakes were found in the writing. 1 (50%) error was in the agreement/verb-tense category and 1 in the spelling category.

Student 18 (S18) free-writing

There were 11 errors in S18's free-writing, entitled *How to make tempe bacem*. Articles/determiners/plurals and spelling categories had the most errors with 5 (45.4%) and 4 (36.4%) errors respectively. Only 1 (9.1%) error was identified from each of the pronoun and the agreement/verb-tense categories.

The number of errors from the most to the least in each category in each sample above is set-out in the table that follows:

Table 2. Number of errors in each category in each sample.

Student No.	Number of errors in each category						Total errors
	Agreement/verb tense	Spelling	Articles/determiners/plurals	Lexical choice	Preposition/collocation	Pronoun	
1	10	3	2	-	-	-	15
2	2	12	4	1	3	-	22
3	2	2	-	-	-	-	4
4	9	3	1	1	-	-	14
5	8	1	2	1	1	-	13
6	7	2	1	2	1	-	13
7	7	1	-	-	-	-	8

Table 2 continued...

8	1	-	-	-	2	-	3
9	-	3	3	-	-	-	6
10	4	2	5	4	-	-	15
11	4	1	1	1	1	-	8
12	5	-	1	6	-	4	16
13	15	2	5	-	-	-	22
14	3	1	-	1	2	-	7
15	4	2	3	1	1	-	11
16	6	2	4	1	2	-	15
17	1	1	-	-	-	-	2
18	1	4	5	-	-	1	11
Total (%)	89 (43.4%)	42 (20.5%)	37 (18%)	19 (9.2%)	13 (6.3%)	5 (2.4%)	205

Based on Table 2, it can be seen that the area in which the students as a whole made most errors were in *agreement/verb tense* (43.4%), followed by *spelling* (20.5%) and *article/determiners/plurals* (18%). Few errors were found in *lexical choice* (9.2%), *preposition/collocation* (6.3%) and the least in *pronoun* (2.4%).

4.2 Analysis of the Questionnaires

4.2.1 Difficulties Faced by Students in Producing Free-Writing

The results from the questionnaires showed that there were various reasons for the students to face difficulties in generating error free free-writing. They mostly perceived difficulties in the area of lack of ideas/organizing ideas. In this section, Tables 3 and 4 show their views towards free-writing activities:

Table 3. The main problems faced in producing free-writing.

No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
6	a. Lack of ideas/difficulties in organizing ideas	8	44.5%
	b. Inadequate vocabulary	2	11.1%
	c. Lack of exercises	2	11.1%
	d. Grammatical problems	6	33.3%
	Total	18	100%

Most students experienced some difficulties in writing due to their lack of ideas/difficulties in organizing ideas (44.5%). Grammatical problems were also an important issue faced by these students in producing error free free-writing since one third of them chose this option. The rest of them faced difficulties in the area of insufficient vocabulary and lack of exercises. It is assumed that the latter was very much related to their unfamiliarity with writing.

Table 4. Mistakes in grammatical conventions in free-writing assignments.

No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
7	a. Verb-tense/agreement	9	50%
	b. Word choice	0	0
	c. Spelling, Preposition/collocation	5	27.7%
	d. Articles/plurals/determiner	4	23.3%
	Total	18	100%

Similar to the finding in the previous analysis, most errors in the students writing appeared in the area of verb-tense/agreement. Based on Table 4, it can be seen that half (50%) of the students made this kind of mistake. The table also shows that students made mistakes in the areas of spelling, preposition/collocation and articles/plurals/determiner, at 27.7% and 23.3% respectively. None of the students felt lexical choice/word choice was a difficulty.

4.2.2. Students' Opinions towards Writing Activities in General and Lecturers' Comments on Their Free-Writing Results

Tables 5 present the results from the questionnaire on these issues.

Table 5. The students' opinion about writing as a subject.

No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
1	a. Very pleased	9	50%
	b. Pleased	7	38.9%
	c. Not really pleased	2	11.1%
	d. Not pleased	0	0
	Total	18	100%

Table 5 shows that half of the class (50%) were very pleased with writing as a subject and 7 (38.9%) of them were pleased. On the other hand, only 2 (11.1%) students were *not really pleased*. This result indicates that most students enjoyed learning writing, whilst none of the students chose the option: *not pleased*.

Table 6. The students' writing activity outside of the class.

No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
2	a. Often	7	38.9%
	b. Sometimes	10	55.5%
	c. Seldom	1	5.6%
	d. Never	0	0
	Total	18	100%

Based on Table 6, it can be clearly seen that the option *sometimes* was the option most often chosen by the students. More than half of the class (55.5%) chose this option. 7 students confidently selected the first option (*often*) indicating that writing was also prioritized outside of the class. Whilst only 1 student chose seldom for practising writing outside of the class and none chose never.

Table 7. The students' opinion whether writing is one of the difficult subjects

No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
3	a. Strongly agree	0	0
	b. Agree	12	66.6%
	c. Disagree	5	27.8%
	d. Strongly disagree	1	5.6%
	Total	18	100%

According to Table 7, more than half of the students believed that writing was one of the difficult subjects because more than half of the students – 12 (66.6%) chose

agree. 5 students chose *disagree* and 1 student found that writing was not one of the difficult subjects by choosing *strongly disagree*.

Table 8. The students' opinion whether free-writing may improve writing skills in general.

No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
4	a. Strongly agree	10	55.5%
	b. Agree	8	44.5%
	c. Disagree	0	0
	d. Strongly disagree	0	0
	Total	18	100%

As can be seen in Table 8, more than 10 (50%) of the students *strongly agree* that free writing may improve writing skills in general whilst the remaining 8 students (44.5%) chose the option *agree*. This shows that the students had a positive response toward the free-writing activity even though in general they faced some difficulties in producing error free free-writing

Table 9. The students' opinion whether free-writing can help to generate ideas.

No	Options	Frequency	Percentage
5	a. Strongly agree	4	22.3%
	b. Agree	12	66.7%
	c. Disagree	0	0
	d. Strongly disagree	0	0
	Total	18	100%

The data from Table 9 shows that more than half of the students agree that free writing can help generate ideas. 4 students even strongly agree to it. Not one of them chose the options disagree and strongly disagree for this statement, but 2 students made no choice. The result indicates that free-writing *can help to generate ideas*

Table 10. The students' opinion whether the lecturer's comment/feedback on writing is very useful for further writing.

No	Options	Frequencies	Percentage
8	a. Strongly agree	13	72.2%
	b. Agree	5	27.8%
	c. Disagree	0	0
	d. Strongly disagree	0	0
	Total	18	100%

Turning to the lecturer's comment/feedback on the students' writing, 72.2% of students strongly agree that those comments are very useful for further writing improvement. Another 5 students chose to *agree* with this statement. None of the students opted for *disagree* or *strongly disagree* options. This showed that the students learn from the comments provided in order to improve their writing.

Table 11. The students' opinion whether lecturer's comments/feedback can significantly decrease the number of errors produced in free-writing.

No	Options	Frequencies	Percentage
9	a. Strongly agree	10	55.5%

Table 11 continued...

	b. Agree	8	44.5%
	c. Disagree	0	0
	d. Strongly disagree	0	0
	Total	18	100%

The data in Table 11 shows that more than 50% of the students believed that their lecturer's comments/feedback can significantly decrease the number of errors produced in their free-writing. 10 students chose the option *strongly agree*, and the rest chose *agree* with this statement. Since no one chose *disagree* or *strongly disagree* options, it can be assumed that the students employed the comments provided to them to try to reduce the number of errors in their writing.

Table 12. The students' opinion whether the lecturer's comment/feedback influences the students' ability in producing further free-writing significantly.

No	Options	Frequencies	Percentage
10	a. Strongly agree	0	0
	b. Agree	18	100%
	c. Disagree	0	0
	d. Strongly disagree	0	0
	Total	18	100%

Surprisingly, all of students (100%) chose to *agree* that the lecturers' comments/feedback influenced their ability in producing further free-writing. It can be concluded that the lecturers' comments were an influential input for the students in order to create more and better writing in the future.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 The Students' Writing

One of the objectives of this study was to identify the errors/mistakes made by students in their free-writing. The findings showed that a variety of errors occurred in their free-writing and these related to errors in the grammatical conventions, such as agreement/verb-tense, spelling, lexical choice, pronouns and others. These mistakes appeared variously amongst the students' writings representing their ability in applying the rules of grammar in writing itself. It is believed that the more they practice the easier they could produce better writing. This is pertinent to what Oshima and Hogue (2007) state that:

Writing is never a one-step action; it is an ongoing creative act. When you first write something, you have already been thinking about what to say and how to say it. Then after you finished writing, you read over what you have written and make changes and corrections. You write and revise and write and revise again until you are satisfied that your writing expresses exactly what you want to say. (Oshima & Hogue, 2007, p. 15)

This investigation revealed that the *agreement/verb-tense* category (43.4%) had the most errors found in the students' free-writing. Almost all students made mistakes

in this category in their writing. An assumption emerged then that the students did not master this part of grammar well even though this category is very crucial in constructing a sentence to be developed into a paragraph. Spelling was another category where there were often mistakes in their writing. This may be due to being careless whilst the writing also indicated the lack of mastering lexical skills. The students, therefore, should pay more attention to their writing to produce better writing. The following areas of grammatical conventions that had many errors were the spelling (20.5%) and the *articles/determiners/plurals* category (18%). The students need to pay more attention in using articles as they appeared sometimes to be confused whether to use a definite article or an indefinite one when crafting a sentence. The

Turning to *lexical choice* (9.2%) and *preposition/collocation* (6.3%) categories, some students experienced difficulties in these categories in their writings. These kinds of mistakes, especially the *lexical choice* category, influence the meaning of writings that can lead to misunderstandings amongst readers. The students, therefore, should be careful in selecting the words used in their writing to ensure that the words symbolize the meanings meant to be conveyed. In terms of the *preposition/collocation* category, although it seems a simple category, it is essentially very difficult to be mastered and applied correctly in free-writing.

The *misuse of pronouns* (2.4%) was the least category found in the students' free-writing. Henderson and Moran (2010, p. 367), accordingly, highlight that the problem of pronoun-antecedent agreement is especially common among student writers when the antecedent noun is either an indefinite pronoun or a singular noun referring to a person where gender is unspecified. The accuracy of using this point, thus, is necessary in order to recognize who or where to refer to.

By recognizing these categories, it can further help teachers to construct their teaching for writing to be more focused on how students can avoid these types of errors. Therefore, the students can be better prepared in their learning for writing.

5.2 Questionnaire

After analyzing the data, a variety of reasons were found on the students' difficulties in producing free writing as the response to the second research question of this study. The results showed that almost all students experienced difficulties in the area of grammar, in spite of lack of ideas. It indicated their limited ability in mastering the grammatical conventions which led to errors in writing. Fregeau (1999) claims that whether the students learn writing or not may depend on their attitudes towards writing and the requirements they perceive which contributes to their learning. Furthermore, the questionnaire also inquired into the students' opinions towards the lecturers' comments and feedback on their writing, which is related to the third research question. Almost all students agreed that the comments and feedback provided on their writing were very useful to avoid similar mistakes that might happen in their future writing. The students also believed that feedback from their lecturers may decrease the number of errors in their future writing. It is assumed that the students will learn from the comments/feedback provided by their lecturers in order to produce better writing. As has been explained previously, the more practice the students get the more they can produce better quality writing.

6. CONCLUSION

The results from this study showed that knowledge of grammatical conventions was one of the main factors faced by the students in constructing error free free-writing. Some errors in grammar were found in the students' writing, especially in the categories of agreement/verb-tense, spelling, articles/determiners/plurals, pronouns, lexical choice and preposition/collocation. With respect to the number of errors which occurred, errors in the agreement/verb-tense category were the most frequent in their writings. Most students made errors in this category which resulted in poor writing. Incorrect spelling and errors in the use of articles/determiners/plurals were the next ranked categories in terms of errors. The least common mistakes in their writing were in choice of pronouns, lexical choice and preposition/collocation.

Based on the answers to the questionnaire, most students provided the reason for difficulties in writing as *lack of ideas/ difficulties in organizing ideas* as the main obstacle they faced in their writing, instead of inadequate vocabulary and lack of exercises. The students, however, found that free-writing may improve their writing skills in general, such as in producing ideas. In light of the lecturers' comments/feedback on their free-writing, the students gave a positive response since almost all of them agreed that these comments and feedback offer them better solutions to produce better writing in the future. The students also believed that the lecturers' comments and feedback may decrease the number of errors in their future writings.

Due to the limitations of this study, in particular the limited number of students' free-writing analyzed and the limited scope (as the study was at only one institution), therefore, it is suggested that future studies should involve a larger number of participants from more institutions to gain a better understanding of the problems faced by the students in writing. The comments and feedback from the lecturers regarding free-writing should also be further analysed, so that the type of comments that can really help students improve their writing can be identified.

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The Application of Swales' Model in Writing a Research Article Introduction

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Abstract

This research attempts to suggest an alternative solution for writers in general and graduate students in particular in writing a proper research article introduction. In order to do so, the authors explored how the Swales' model is applied in writing a research article introduction. This was approached through a library study on the Swales model application. Some previous studies applying Swales Model were gathered and categorized into three categories – application of Swales model on different types of genre besides the research article introduction, different discipline or field and the last is the application of Swales' on the research article introduction across languages. Another three articles written by professional writers were also collected as samples of introductions that have successfully presented three obligatory moves – establishing a territory (Move 1), establishing a niche (Move 2) and occupying the niche or presenting the present work (Move 3) – proposed by Swales' model. Those introductions were segmented into those three moves and analyzed based on a communication purpose in every step derived from each move. In order to add more comprehension about the model, an analysis was also conducted on introductions for seven articles in the English Education Journal (EEJ) published by the Graduate Program in English Language Education at Syiah Kuala University. The purpose of the analysis was to show the differences in structure of introductions organized without following the CARS Swales model. Conclusions are that the CARS Swales model is relevant for the teaching of introductions for research writing and it can be a guideline to teach students the moves and steps of this model for communication purposes.

Keywords: Swales' model, Create a Research Space (CARS), writing, research article introduction.

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1. INTRODUCTION

A research article is one of the genres of academic writing that is believed to be a great medium for spreading and disseminating knowledge in the academic world (Peacock, 2002). The need for information and knowledge from other experts from outside of one's local area, particularly from English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) countries has made research articles an important genre amongst EFL and ESL scholars and researchers. The great number of research articles already published then become a resource for many writers, particularly for non-native speakers of English to refer to in writing a good research article in order to convince readers, editors as well as reviewers that the research article proposed deserves to be published (Flowerdew, 1999).

The importance of research article development in academic communities has stimulated many scientists to conduct research on it, including the organization structure of research articles; ranging from the structure of abstracts (Golebiowski, 2008; Samraj, 2005), results (Bret (1994) and William (1999), as cited in Ozturk, 2007), discussions (Holmes, 1997, as cited in Jalilifar, 2010) and conclusions (Ruiying & Allison, 2003). As part of the interest of studies conducted on all sections of research articles, the introduction section has received special attention particularly following the introduction of the Swales' model (1990) pioneered the Create a Research Space (CARS) model.

Writing a research article introduction is demanding. Safnil (2007) states that the introduction for a research article represents the connection between the readers and the authors' work, if it can bridge the gap between the knowledge of the intended readers and the research paper then it will show that the introduction is successful. Hunston (1994) as cited in Safnil (2007) also claims that the introduction section communicates the sub-persuasive purpose of the research article which shows that the research article is necessary and worthwhile, thus, if readers find that the introduction to the article is convincing, interesting and necessary they will be more likely to read the whole article. Gupta (as cited in Safnil, 2007) asserts that writing an introduction for a scientific text raises problems for not only novice authors or students but also for professional or experienced authors. Additionally, Flowerdew (1999, p. 127) states, "the introduction is challenging because it requires a persuasive style of writing in which the individual voice of the author(s) needs to come through".

On the basis of the importance, position and function of a research article introduction, a standard schema is needed in order to write one successfully. Otherwise, the writers intended purpose may not be successfully conveyed to the readers and may fail to convince them and also reviewers as well as the editor that the article proposed deserves to be published. This researcher therefore, believes that the CARS or Swales' model is a good schema to use in writing a research article introduction. Based on the above research problem, the author formulated the following research question: *How does the Swales' model apply for writing the introduction section to convey the essence of a research article?*

The present study tries to look at the application of the Swales' model in providing a solution for the problems faced by EFL and ESL writers in organizing an introduction section for a research article. In particular, it aims to find out how the Swales' model is applicable for conveying the proper message for the introduction section to a research article. Moreover, referring to the context of the author of this

study, the study of the development of a research article in English is still limited in undergraduate and graduate level studies. Moreover, it is found that hardly any studies have been conducted on the application of the Swales' model. Thus, the result of this study will be fruitful for students at undergraduate and graduate levels in writing a research article in English. It is hoped that this kind of study may contribute to teaching academic writing and help teachers and students in organizing academic articles in English.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction to the Swales or CARS Model

The Swales model more famously known as the CARS model initiated a new concept of how the introduction for a research paper is best structured. The launching of the CARS model in 1990 by Swales has been said to be one of the most significant formulations for the structure of a research article introduction. Golebiowski and Liddicoat (2002) assert that CARS emerges as a primary idea in the schema of English academic writing written by Anglo-Americans. CARS is exclusively designed for introductions because this section is considered the most problematic section amongst others (Flowerdew, 1999; Swales, 1990) not only for EFL and ESL writers but also for native speakers.

Many analysts on academic text structure have dealt with this model. Some analysts followed and adapted the CARS model, yet others commented on the mismatch between the CARS format and the structure of introductions studied. Amongst those analysts who adapted and commented on the Swales model are Dudley-Evans (1986), Crookes (1986), Swales and Najjar (1987), Jacoby (1987), Peng (1987), Lewin and Fine (1996) (as cited in Golebiowski, 1999).

Various analysts have challenged others to research whether CARS is a fixed formulated structure for some English academic texts or an inclusive model that is relevant to apply for any discipline across languages and cultures (Golebiowski & Liddicoat, 2002). Research finding now show that rhetorical organization of texts is found to be different even though languages and cultures may be closely related to one another. This follows from research conducted by Ahmad (1997, as cited in Golebiowski, 1999) on Malay natural sciences articles and Safnil (2000) on Indonesian social sciences articles. Even though both languages derive from a similar root, the analysts found there are some steps and move in CARS which are not fully applicable for those articles. The 1990s Swales model is illustrated as follows:

Move 1, establishing a territory: Step 1: Claiming centrality (and/or), Step 2: Making topic generalization(s) (and/or), Step 3: Reviewing items of previous research

Move 2, establishing a niche: Step 1A: Counter-claiming (or), Step 1B: Indicating a gap (or), Step 1 C: Question-raising (or), Step 1D: Continuing a tradition

Move 3, occupying the niche: Step 1A: Outlining purposes (or), Step 1B: Announcing present research, Step 2: Announcing principal findings, Step 3: Indicating RA (Research Article) structure

However, since many gaps in some steps and moves of the 1990s CARS model have been found in some research papers, the flexibility of the CARS model had to be taken into account. Therefore in 2004, Swales proposed an updated version of CARS which is called CARS model 2004 (Broines, 2012) or the standard research article (Swales, 2004). This reconsidered model is said to be applicable for any discipline and any culture. Some steps in each move are fortified with some adjustment for different disciplines. Thus it makes this new model more adaptable to apply in the writing and analysis of research articles. The 2004 Swales' model is illustrated below:

Move 1: Establishing a territory (citations required)*, via**

Topic generalizations of increasing specificity

Move 2: Establishing a niche (citations possible)*, via**

Step 1A: Indicating a gap **or**

Step 1B: Adding to what is known

Step 2: Presenting positive justification (optional)

Move 3: Presenting the present work, via

Step1: Announcing present research descriptively and/or purposively (obligatory)

Step 2: Presenting research questions or hypotheses*(optional)

Step 3: Definitional clarifications (optional)*

Step 4: Summarizing methods (optional)*

Step 5: Announcing principal outcomes **

Step 6: Stating the value of the present research **

Step 7: Outlining the structure of the paper **

* Optional and less fixed in order

** Probable in some academic disciplines

*** Possible cyclical patterning of moves particularly in longer Introductions

Overall, the updated version of CARS does not show dramatic differences from the previous model. In the previous model, move 1 shows three steps which include claiming centrality, making topic generalization and reviewing items of previous research respectively, whereas in the most recent version, there is only one step in Move 1. Move 2 moreover has significant changes between the two versions. The former model consists of four realization steps: counterclaiming, raising a question, indicating a gap, and continuing tradition. In the latest model however, Swales (2004) reduces it to two steps, with the first step split into two points derived from the former step 1.

Furthermore, Swales (1990) illustrates that Move 3 in the previous model shows three steps in which the first step was outlining purposes of the present research or announcing the present research. If one point is left out of this step in the research introduction, it is still considered acceptable. However, in the updated version, step 1 of move 3 is considered obligatory because outlining the purpose and the nature of the present research are combined in one step. This preference was made by considering the additional elements suggested by Anthony's (1999) study of computer science introductions. Moreover, other steps such as listing research questions or hypothesis, definitional clarifications, summarizing methods and stating the value of the present

research, which are missed in the 1990s model, make move 3 of the updated version consist of 7 steps (Swales, 2004). Steps 2 to step 4 are each optional and less fixed in their order of occurrence than the others, and steps 6 and 7 are present in some fields but unlikely in others.

2.2 Previous Research on the Application of the CARS Model

The following are some previous researches that have applied the Swales' model in introductory sections for widely ranging studies from different genres, across different disciplines and different languages.

2.2.1 A Brief Summary of the Application of the CARS Model in Different Genres

A study conducted by Samraj (2008) on introductions for master's theses across the disciplines of philosophy, biology and linguistics has proved that the Swales' model can be applied to various disciplines. The findings show that introductions for the three different disciplines follow the three moves suggested by the Swales' model. All introductions have the conventions of CARS in their texts; even though some steps are absent in the introductions for the philosophical theses. The biology and linguistics theses introductions for example, are equally similar in their rhetorical structure with differences mainly in step 2 of move 3 where a list of hypotheses are mostly present in the biology theses introductions. On the other hand, in philosophy theses introductions, the writers frequently do not justify their philosophical arguments in terms of previous research in the selected area (Samraj, 2008). Overall, the three theses introductions followed the three moves and several steps that are suggested by the Swales' model, only sometimes does a certain discipline not present a certain step. It shows that the structure of the Swales' model can be applied as the framework in organizing introductions for various disciplines.

Another study was conducted on introductions for PhD thesis by Carbonell-Olivares, Gil-Salom and Soler-Monreal (2011). This study similarly reveals that not all introductions conform fully to the 1990 Swales' model. However, the Move 1–Move 2–Move 3 arrangement is the structural pattern most generally followed. Differences occur due to differences in disciplines but are mainly caused by the differences in language patterns. As Yakhontova (2006, p. 154) states that “The discrepancies in writing styles and patterns of textual organization revealed in the texts contrasted are traditionally labelled as ‘cultural’ or ‘culture-specific’ differences”. In the Spanish introductions Move 2 is not always present. However, the presence of Move 1 and Move 3 are obligatory moves in PhD introductions. It shows that the need to establish a niche (Move 2) which would justify the work done is not demanded in the Spanish introductions (Carbonell-Olivares, Gil-Salom & Soler-Monreal, 2011). This finding agrees with Burgess's theory (2002), as cited in Carbonell-Olivares, Gil-Salom and Soler-Monreal (2011), that certain writers of RAIs (Research Article Introductions) tend to view the topic or problem discussed as entirely unfamiliar territory for their readers which explains why Spanish PhD candidates put so much effort into describing the territory and occupying a particular niche. Regarding the presence of Move 2 in the Spanish research papers, Carbonell-Olivares, Gil-Salom and Soler-Monreal (2011, p. 14) comment “showing knowledge of the field of research and defending a new and specific contribution to it seem to have higher priority than establishing a gap in

previous research, which explains the non-antagonistic point of view in the Spanish introductions". It indicates that the Spanish scientific community is less competitive compared to the English scientific community because in the structure of the English introductions it is usual to *establish a niche*.

The step analysis suggests that the structure of Spanish introductions is mainly motivated by the presentation of background information (S2 of M1) and the work carried out (S2 of M3), as well as the use of that information in a sequential and orderly style. Whereas, the English introductions do not only show great focus on the addition of background information and a separate step to the review of previous research (S2 and S4 of M1), but they also tend to stress the writer's own work, its originality and contribution to the field of study (S1, S2, S6, S7 of M3) (Carbonell-Olivares, Gil-Salom & Soler-Monreal, 2011).

2.2.2 A Brief Summary of the CARS Model Application across Disciplines

The application of the Swales' model across disciplines can be seen in the investigation conducted by Samraj (2002) on wildlife behaviour and conservation biology. The result shows that introductions for studies of wildlife behaviour and biology follow all parts of the moves contained in the new revised Swales' model (2004). Formerly this study had suggested that the old version of Swales' model (1990) be revised. Samraj's criticism that the presence of a literature review need not only appear in move 1 has instigated Swales' (2004) to suggest that review of literature need not only occur in the introduction but could occur throughout the article. Therefore, the 2004 version of Swales' model can successfully account for most of the limitations mentioned (Ozturk, 2007) with some new steps answering Samraj's criticisms.

2.2.3 A Brief Summary of the CARS Model Application across Languages

A study of move analysis across languages using the Swales' model for the introductions for research articles contrasted those written in Polish to others written in English (Golebiowski, 1999). The study concentrated on introductions to articles in the field of psychology. The findings showed that the introductions in Polish all failed in terms of the Swales' CARS model. This is because almost all rhetorical structure which could be classified in terms of Swales' moves was absent. It shows that Polish scholars employ a different writing style or genre to that of the English speaking writers. The Polish scholars writing in English tended to preserve their native style of writing even though they are faced with prescribed schemata for an acceptable scientific article. This affected the presentation of research articles they wrote which finally showed less rhetorical discipline (Golebiowski, 1999). As the CARS model was developed for the analysis of English scientific texts or introductions produced by native speaking English writers, it does not match in the case of introductions written by Polish writers when they are writing in English or Polish. Moreover, for teaching academic writing, this is a very useful case to teach students about English writing style compared to other languages.

On the other hand, a contrastive study between Thai and English studies in biochemistry conducted by Kanoksipalatham (2007) reveals that the structural organization displays similarities across both languages in terms of the moves identified and the general move sequence within the Swales' model. However, introductions in

Thai do not state the principal finding (M3, S5) which is different from that of the introductions in English. This case claimed that presenting the findings in introductions shows the characteristics of scientific articles in competitive communities predominantly those in American and English speaking countries (Kanoksipalatham, 2007). He also points out that this typical writing style is triggered by the competition among researchers to obtain research grants which are mainly granted for those that have worthwhile qualities.

Therefore, to show the importance of the study conducted, scientists are expected to highlight major findings of the study to demonstrate in brief their contribution to the field near the beginning of the research paper. It is important to note that the Swalesian style of introduction is worthwhile in writing a good presentation for a research paper. In addition, this model is fruitful when students are involved in English discourse in communities where competition is highly valued.

Furthermore, cultural influences in writing style cannot be avoided. This concern has been studied by Mauraneen (1993), Silva (1993), and Harris, Power and Wang (as cited in Mosher, Granroth & Hicks, 2000). A contrastive study between Chinese and English in educational psychology studies conducted by Loi and Evans (2010) scrutinized cultural differences in the structural organization of RAIs. This study adopted both the 1990 and the 2004 CARS models by Swales in order to study the differences between English and Chinese introductions. Loi and Evans (2010) found that both the English and the Chinese introductions had differences and similarities in rhetorical structure.

The study revealed similarities between the Chinese and the English introductions as both followed the three obligatory moves in the Swales models. Differences however, were noted in the use of language. Chinese writing tends to be more implicit than English writing. In principle there is high-contextual communication in Chinese. Even though move 1 exists in Chinese introductions, which is the centrality claim for the topic, it is lacking in explicitness (Loi & Evan, 2010). Based on Chinese traditions writing will be more highly valued when arguments are expressed implicitly in the text. Chinese writers also avoid making strong claims about the findings from previous researchers. It is strongly believed that criticizing the work of others in public is interpreted as embarrassment, Lu (2000) as cited in Loi and Evans (2010) states this as a face-saving strategy, which is common in Chinese culture. Nevertheless, apart from those differences, it is important to emphasize that the move analysis in Chinese followed the Swales models.

3. METHOD

This study set sights on evaluating the Swales' model as a tool that is useful to develop ability in academic writing for research articles. The updated version of the Swales' model was used in this study. The study also examined a number of documents that facilitated the author in her investigation of this issue. Thus, the discussion about the use of the Swales' model in writing an 'introduction' for a research article was based on previous studies of the Swales' model, including comments and critics from other researchers; and the use of the Swales' model in applications. To examine the application of the Swales or CARS model in depth for writing research article introductions, three articles from professional writers were examined. To differentiate

these from introductions that do not necessarily follow the CARS model, the analysis of introductions from seven research article from the English Education Journal (EEJ) Vol.1, No. 1, 2010 published by the Graduate Program in English Language Education at Syiah Kuala University was also conducted.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Results from Analysis of the Introductions for Three Articles Written by Professional Writers

The three articles analyzed proved that even though not every step from the three moves suggested by the Swales model were performed in the introductions, nevertheless the three obligatory moves were significant in those introductions. The introductions of the professional writers examined in detail were as follows. *Genre pedagogy: Language, literacy and L2 writing instruction*: M1-M2,S1A-M2,S2-M3, S1-M3, S7, *I speak therefore I am: Self-perceptions of identity in immersion program language learners as an expression of intercultural competence*: M1-M2,S1B-M2, S2-M3, S1-M3,S6, and *Prominent messages in Education and Applied Linguistic abstracts: How do authors appeal to their prospective readers?*: M1-M2,S1A-M3, S1.

All the three introductions followed the CARS model schema which is one of the schemas that are acceptable in scientific papers. It showed that the introductions to research articles written by English professional writers were easy to segment into the three obligatory moves proposed by the CARS model.

4.2 Results from Analysis of the Introductions from Seven Articles in the EEJ Journal

It was concluded that only three of the seven articles in the EEJ followed the CARS model in terms of structure. Two articles, article 1, and 2 did not follow the moves and steps suggested by CARS, and one article, article 6, ends up with an unusual move that is not normally seen in the CARS structure. The result from the analysis is tabulated below:

Table 1. Move structure of the introductions from seven articles in the EEJ.

Article	Move sequence	M1	M2	M3	Total
1	M1-M3S1	1	-	1	2
2	M1	1	-	-	1
3	M1-M2S1A-M2S1B-M3S1-M3S2[M3S1]-M3S1	1	2	3[1]	5[1]
4	M1-M2S1A-M3S1-M2S2-M3S1-M3S2-M3S1	1	2	4	7
5	M1-M2S1A-M3S1-M3S2	1	1	2	4
6	M1-M3S1-M3S2-M3S1-M3S6	1	-	4	5
7	M1-M2S1A-M3S1-M3S3-M3S1-M1	2	1	3	6

[...] indicates a move embedded within another move

The result of the analysis depicted the following pattern: *Establishing a field by topic generalization—presenting the problems of related phenomenon—presenting the*

current work by stating the research question/implications of the study. Establishing a field by stating the topic is clearly seen in the introduction to each article in the EEJ.

5. DISCUSSION

The analysis of the introductions from the three articles written by professional writers has illustrated the simplicity of the Swales' CARS model schema application for an introduction. The three obligatory moves in the CARS model schema are presented and clearly stated in all three introductions and it obviously helps the readers understand the points discussed by the writer and also gives a clear picture about how the current study is presented. The findings of this analysis support the earlier investigation of the CARS model when applied to the rhetorical structure for introductions done by Golebiowski (1999) that showed that the CARS model is successfully portrayed in English introduction sections. Thus, it shows that the CARS model is a suitable schema to be applied for writing an introduction based on the English academic writing style.

On the other hand, the analysis of the introductions from seven articles in the EEJ has shown a dissimilar result. It has shown that only some introductions from the articles analyzed followed the CARS model. In the CARS model, M1 (*establishing a territory or field*) is supported by reviewing a large number of previous researches. Reviewing previous studies is needed in order to make a claim about the topic discussed. This part is also important for the reader's information in understanding the research focus. For that reason, Swales (2004) stated that citations are required in Move 1. The findings of this preliminary study, however, have shown that one (1) out of the 7 articles does not cite previous research and two (2) other articles refer to only one citation in the introduction. Reflecting on the CARS model, it seems that citations are not obligatory in establishing the background of the topic in those articles.

The second move in CARS is supported by the *indicating a gap step, adding to what is known and positive justification*. Move 2 of the introductions to articles in the EEJ was, however, mostly signalled by *presenting the problem from related phenomena*. The gap that the authors wanted to fill is focused on the problems that each author found from phenomena in their teaching experience. This step is considered as a pattern for a Research Article Introduction (RAI) in the EEJ, because no other gaps were found such as criticizing related methods, or revealing the limitation of the findings from previous studies. From the view point of the CARS model, presenting this kind of step in the research articles is accepted, but the critical point of the research article is weak. Another typical introduction was also found in the EEJ articles. There are three articles that do not have an M2. Therefore, the writers should have to establish that the previous research literature was not complete and required more inquiries by presenting an M2.

Move 3 in the CARS model is supported by many steps. One of them is the obligatory step *announcing the present research descriptively and or purposefully*. This step was extensively presented in the EEJ articles except for article 2. The writers tend to explicitly announce the research questions (M3-S2). Other steps such as M3-S3 (*definitional clarification*) and M3-S6 (*stating the value of the present research*) were also utilized in the RAI but infrequently appeared in all articles. However, the presence

of M3-S1 in the articles has shown that the authors are aware of the importance of stating the aim of their study.

It can be summarized that research articles in the EEJ did not fully follow the schema suggested in the CARS model proposed by Swales. The presence of M1 seemingly showed the need of the writers/researchers to state the topic at the beginning part of the introduction, whilst M2 is obviously seen in the need of the writers/researchers to state that the problem of the study is to fill the gap or the weakness in previous research. Therefore, it is suggested that to establish a more critical and competitive research community, the writers/researchers could elaborate more in order to establish the niche of the current study through indicating a gap in previous research. The presence of M3 in the introductions is significantly observed through M3-S1 and some optional steps such as M3-S2, M3-S3 and M3-S6. However, it is not fully covered in all introductions. Swales suggested that the presence of other optional steps could increase the value and impression of the articles and assure the readers that the article presented is significant.

6. CONCLUSION

The study sought to answer the following research question: *How does the Swales' model apply for writing the introduction section to convey the essence of a research article?*

In order to answer the research question, the procedural application of Swales' model in writing an introduction section was presented. First of all, the author took some samples of introductions written by researchers who applied the Swales' model, and then segmented those introductions into the three obligatory moves of the Swales' model. The procedure of how Swales' model applied for writing a research article introduction is briefly summarized in the following description.

The first move—*establishing territory*—is done at the beginning of an introduction; this move shows a big picture of the general topic of a research article. The writer in this move tries to broadly draw where the subject of the article falls. In this part, the writer also reviews previous researches in order to support the topic. According to Swales, reviewing previous research is required in Move 1 (M1) in order to add to the credibility of the study conducted. Commonly, the topic generalization and the review of previous research are separated in different paragraphs but in longer introductions the review of previous research can extend across several paragraphs.

The next move is move two (M2) called *establishing a niche*. In this move, the writer then points out to the reader the particular area of the broader subject that his research article will deal with. In this move, the writer can include *indicating a gap* or *adding to what is known* steps. In addition, the writer can also state positive justification as an optional step in the study conducted. In an *indicating a gap step*, some limitations from previous studies related to the area of the current study are presented. Otherwise, the significance of the current study will not be clearly pointed out. Whilst an *adding to what is known* step is presented when the writers do not criticize the previous studies but add some other new points to the topic. A *presenting positive justification* step sets out positive points justifying the study which include benefits and usefulness to readers or participants of the study conducted.

After presenting the second move, the next significant move that must be done by the writer is *occupying the niche/presenting the present work* or Move three (M3). In this move, the writer then delineates exactly what this article will accomplish in relation to move 2, and gives the reader a sense of how the article will proceed. This move contains one obligatory step—*announcing present research descriptively and /or purposefully*, three optional steps—*presenting research questions or hypothesis, definitional clarifications, and summarizing methods*, and three other steps that are probable in some fields—*announcing principal outcomes, stating the value of the present research and outlining the structure of the paper*. Those steps certainly give opportunities for the writers of research papers to expand the interestingness of their work towards the end of their introduction. Moreover, the availability of optional steps depends on some factors, such as the nature of the research, the aspirations of researchers and the conventions of the research field. Those steps can create a better impression and reassure readers that the paper is worth pursuing further.

On the other hand, this preliminary study was conducted to observe whether the introductions for the articles studied follow some obligatory schema for introductions in research articles. The findings however, showed that the articles have their own particular pattern: *Establishing a field by topic generalization—presenting the problems of related phenomenon—presenting the current work by stating the research question/implication of the study*. It was found that the articles did not follow all the steps in the CARS model, particularly the *indicating a gap* step by reviewing the limitations of previous research, which CARS perceives as an obligatory step. Nevertheless, it is not presented in those introductions. *Indicating a gap* by reviewing the limitation from the previous research is considered an important step because this step shows the significance of the current study. Thus it makes the study worthwhile to be pursued further. Additionally, from the analysis, the introductions from some of the articles in the EEJ have different orders of moves to those presented in the CARS model. Two articles do not depict the moves and steps recommended by CARS, and one article, finished with an unusual move that is not in the CARS model.

Using the results from previous research into the study topic has greatly helped the author to present evidence of the usefulness of the CARS model in writing an introduction for a research article. This preliminary study has also become one of the efforts to make the application of the CARS model in research studies become more comprehensible. However, the data used in this study has limitations. The number of previous researches used for the data of this study is still limited and mostly not clearly related to the methods used in this study. Similarly, the number of articles analyzed in this preliminary study is far from sufficient. Only one journal that consists of seven articles was taken as the source of data. In addition, regarding the results of the analysis, the author realizes that it is possible that different individuals may assign different move boundaries, thus the author believes the results of this study analysis could possibly be judgmental because the author analyzed it by herself. Consequently, integrating more authors in analyzing the data could reduce the limitation and help to boost the strength of analysis. This study, however, has teaching implications: viz. the CARS model or schema may assist novice and early career writers in structuring the introduction section of a research paper. For teachers, this model can be used as one of the guidelines used in teaching academic writing.

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Looking into EFL Students' Perceptions in Listening by Using English Movie Videos on YouTube

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Abstract

This study investigated students' interest in using YouTube movie videos in practicing their listening ability either inside or outside of class. This study used a mix of open and closed questionnaires adopted from Kelsen (2009) on the motivation of using YouTube for listening. 45 students enrolled in a Listening III class were taken as the sample. The findings showed that the highest motive for students to use it was because 'using YouTube has been beneficial to their English, followed by 'using YouTube is interesting', then, 'using YouTube motivated them to study English' and 'the YouTube material was relevant to what was studied in class'. The lowest motive included 'using YouTube in class motivated them to use it to themselves to study English outside of classes. Furthermore, some students' open responses to YouTube were: they can practice their English by watching native speakers; it has pictures so it is easy for students to understand the topic, and the materials were relevant since they were practicing listening. Yet, negative responses were also found such as they did not have internet connection at home, were not motivated to do it alone and were not assigned homework to use it. Thus, YouTube can be considered to be used as a material in listening class because it is found to provide many benefits for students.

Keywords: Students' perception, listening, YouTube, movie videos.

1. INTRODUCTION

Various studies have examined the use of multimedia in English language education (Schmid, 2008; Wagner, 2007; Rammal, 2005). Multimedia is the use of many kinds of media including text, sounds, and pictures (Beatty, 2003; Schmid, 2008). One popular media in use today is the internet which makes it feasible for communication as well as being an educational resource (Peterson, 1997, a place for many people to interact, publish something, play and collaborate (Galien, 2010). Even

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though Chhabra (2012) doubts that the internet can provide authentic materials in the English language for teaching, Schmid (2008, p. 1553) says that the internet can be “a vehicle for promising applications in foreign language learning especially for the memorization of vocabulary”.

For the last six years, students at the University of Syiah Kuala (Unsyiah) have become familiar with the internet. Many students now have smart phones which enable them to access the internet everywhere and anytime. In other words, they have the internet on their hand.

At the English Language Department, students learn Listening skill in three semesters for eight credit hours. Listening at this level is aimed at developing the students' competence in the theories and practical skills for listening especially listening to British and American pronunciation, sounds and talks.

In the classroom, I learnt that some of my students were good at basic listening. Basic listening is usually listening about daily conversations at normal speed. However, they sometimes had difficulties when they were listening to conversations with rapid speech. Listening class only takes place once in a week. I found that this was not enough for them to practice listening efficiently. Therefore, during the learning process, they were often motivated to improve their listening skill by listening to English news, songs, movies, and videos through various media such as television, radio, tape, and YouTube. They were able to do this practice at home, alone or with peers. Besides, they were often asked to watch and listen to conversations in movies. For example, they were assigned to write a summary based on a speech by John Foppy on YouTube. In another occasion, they were asked to write down phrases that they heard in some popular movies such as Titanic, Cellular, and many others.

I found that they were quite motivated to have listening practice from authentic materials such as YouTube. They did the tasks I assigned enthusiastically. However, there was no evidence of their opinions towards the use of YouTube. Also there was no evidence as to whether they are motivated to enhance their listening ability by listening to YouTube videos should they be assigned to do so. Therefore, to answer these questions, a research question was developed: “What are the students' opinions about learning listening by using YouTube?”

This study, therefore, is aimed at investigating students' interest and perceptions towards the use of YouTube to improve their listening skills. The findings can also be compared with their interest on the conventional activities in listening class which was by using a tape. Despite there being a number of studies on the use of YouTube in the language classroom, however, no study has been conducted in the Acehnese classroom context at Unsyiah. This study, therefore, is intended to fill in this gap.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Listening Skills

According to Vandergrift (1999, p. 168), listening is “a complex, active process in which the listener must discriminate between sounds, understand vocabulary and grammatical structure, interpret stress and intonation, retain what was gathered in all of the above, and interpret it within the immediate as well as the larger socio cultural context of the utterance”. While to Green (2004), listening involves students' awareness

of the topic being spoken and they will be able to recall listening materials when they are not under pressure of the listening demand. Listening is also an important language skill which learners are required to master because other skills can be associated to listening as well (Sejdiu, 2013).

2.2 Materials Used in Listening Skills

The term material has been shifted from ‘what the teachers use’ to many other definitions, depending on the goals and the skills. Such definitions have been described by Graves (2000, p. 150) who says that “material development means creating, choosing or adapting, and organizing materials and activities so that students can achieve the objective that will help them reach the goal in the course”. While Tomlinson (2012) says that:

Materials for language learning’ will be taken to be anything that can be used to facilitate the learning of a language, including course books, videos, graded readers, flash cards, games, website and mobile phone interactions, though, inevitably, much of the literature focuses on printed materials. Materials can be informative (informing the learners about the target language), instructional (guiding the learners in practicing the language), experiential (providing the learners with experience of the language in use, eliciting (encouraging the learners to use the language) and exploratory (helping the learners to make discoveries about the language. (Tomlinson, 2012, p. 143)

For listening class, CD, VCD, or videos can be used (Arono, 2014) or are commonly used in the form of off line mode.

Along with the development of the information and communication technology, listening is no longer taking place in monotonous activities. Listening becomes more integrated and teaching listening becomes more challenging. It is not a passive activity but it requires students’ attention and ability to comprehend the materials. And those ‘old fashioned’ media (CDs, VCDs) are not used anymore, at least in developing countries or cities. This means that CD and VCD players are no longer found as L2 media. Teachers have looked into new outstanding media or materials in which they can be used or opened in portable tools. The internet (as briefly discussed in the introduction) has taken place in L2, and YouTube is one of the interactive videos mounted on the web.

2.3 Using Movie Video Movies on YouTube for Language Skill

Movie video is one of the media which can be used in language learning. YouTube with its official address www.youtube.com, is a popular site which allows people to upload a video, watch it, and comment on it. Based on the statistical report on its official website (<http://www.youtube.com/yt/press/id/statistics.html>), it has more than one billion visitors every month. Furthermore, it is available in 61 countries in 61 languages, and also available on smart phones. Therefore, thousands of videos with thousands of topics in many languages are available on YouTube. For movies, people can just easily type some key words and related movie videos will appear. There are also a lot of these videos made for educational purposes. With these videos, creative

teachers can choose and can lead students to meaningful activities involving one or the four English skills. Examples of activities may range from conversation activities, 'movie trailer', 'voiceover', to 'famous movie screen re-enactments' which can be used for listening and speaking activities (Watkins and Wilkins, 2011, p.115). In addition, Kreisen (2009) states that:

YouTube, as mentioned, is a readily available source of authentic pop culture material. Encouraging students to interact in an educational capacity with popular culture through English language. YouTube clips may act as a motivating factor for students wishing to further develop their language skills as they endeavour to gain a deeper understanding of content they willingly access online. Moreover, it is also available for students to engage in outside of class in some form of student-centered learning. (Kreisen, 2009, p. 3)

Kreisen (2009) points out that the universality of YouTube has enabled students to know other cultures since the videos are uploaded by many people around the world. Besides, it gives motivation in L2. It also allows students to do video-sharing which can give positive outputs for learning (Snelson & Perkins, 2009), and language learning can take place in a meaningful environment (Alhamami, 2013). Videos that are uploaded can interest students to pay attention not only to the picture but also to the nonverbal gestures and intonation which makes the video full of richness (Stempleski, 2002). Teaching listening by using video is now a common thing since video has audio plus visual which enable students to participate in both (Wagner, 2007). These audio and visual characteristics make it easy for students to recall the material (Kozma, 1991).

Furthermore, "the use of video allows listeners to utilize the non-verbal components of communication that can assist them in processing and comprehending aural input" (Wagner, 2007, p.67) as well as providing "authentic language input" (Cakir, 2006, p. 67) because students are exposed to the real contexts, real people as well as real situations (Moobin, 2008). Thus, YouTube is the leading movie video website that exists today.

2.4 The Implications of Using Video in Language Learning

Cakir (2006, pp. 69-70) lists several ways of using video for language learning which can increase students' motivation especially for learning the four skills: (1) active viewing, as it will increase students' participation to understand the ideas in the movie, (2) freeze framing and prediction (where the teacher can pause the video and draw students' attention by asking some questions or discuss a particular scene), (3) silent viewing (sound off), (4) sound on and vision off, (4) repetition and role play, (5) reproduction activity (an activity in which students are required to be able to recall what was spoken), (6) dubbing activity, and (7) follow up activities.

A study was conducted by Arono (2014) with 89 students in an experimental group who were taught by using interactive media and 126 students in a control group who were taught using audio learning media. The results showed that the students taught with interactive multimedia improved their critical listening skills more than those in the control group. A study on proficiency and motivation by Lamb (2004) with 219 first year students in Indonesia revealed that even though the students had had contacts with English in their environment e.g. magazines, books, TV, music, etc., the

students' proficiency was still low. This study also noted that only a few students were motivated to practice their L2 at home with their own initiative whilst others would do that just because they were assigned homework.

In relation to YouTube, a study conducted by Kelsen (2009) towards EFL students in Taiwan resulted in the students' opinions of its use, using ratings for YouTube as (1) interesting, (2) relevant, (3) beneficial, (4) less motivating in the classroom, and (5) less motivating outside the classroom. This study showed that even though students felt positive about using YouTube in enhancing their English, they were less motivated to use YouTube outside of their class.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Subject

This study aims to find out students' interest in using YouTube for their listening course. The study took place at the English Language Department of the University of Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh Indonesia. There were two listening classes (Class C and D). There were 23 students in Class C and 22 students in class D, making a total of 45 respondents. All of the respondents had already finished two levels of listening classes; Listening I and Listening II. Listening III, in which they were enrolled, was the last level of Listening class in their course of study.

4.2 The Instrument

This study uses a questionnaire (see Appendix 1) to investigate the students' interest in listening to English movie videos on YouTube. The students were given the questionnaire about their attitude to using YouTube. There were 10 questions. Questions 1 to 3 were closed-ended which asked about each student's personal data where they had to put ticks in boxes. The first question asked about the respondents' personal details on: (1) gender, and (2) age, followed by (3) a yes/no question about their getting access to YouTube and to the internet. The next question (4) asked about the students' frequency of looking at videos on YouTube. Question five asked about their purpose of using YouTube. This was an open question.

Items 6- 10 were in the form of Likert-Scale questions; with 5 options: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree. This used mix closed and open form which required students to write their reasons. The reasons were important to know the better picture of what they felt about YouTube. This study adopted the questionnaire from Kelsen (2009) with some modifications to adjust to the condition of the students in the study. For instance, all of the preference (strongly disagree, disagree, etc.) were written out to avoid students' misunderstanding on the degree of preference. Details of the questions are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Questionnaire items (Kelsen, 2009).

<i>No. of items</i>	<i>Statements</i>	<i>Note</i>
1	Gender and age	
2	Do you have access to a computer with high-speed connection outside of class?	
3	Have you used YouTube before?	

Table 1 continued...

4	How often do you use YouTube outside of class?	
5	When do you use YouTube on your own, what do you usually use it for?	
6	Using YouTube materials made class more interesting.	
7	The YouTube material used was relevant to what was studied in class. Reason:	
8	Using YouTube in class has been beneficial to your English. Reason:	
9	Using YouTube motivated you to study English. Reason:	
10	Using YouTube in class motivated you to use it yourself to study English outside of class. Reason:	

5. FINDINGS

5.1 Results from the Questionnaire

Of the 45 respondents, 11 were male students and 34 were female students with ages ranging from 19 to 21 years old. This shows that the sample was dominated by female students. 73% of students said that they can access the Internet with high-speed connection, while only 27% of them could not get hold of Internet with high-speed connection. This means that a majority of the respondents could open YouTube. Along with the developments in information and communication technology in Aceh, many providers are now providing internet service with quite cheap prices. Many students bought internet packages for their mobile phones or android tablets and 'surfing' was no longer regarded as an expensive thing to do.

The third questions asked about whether or not they had ever used YouTube before. All students (100%) said 'Yes'. This was also based on their learning experiences in previous listening classes. They had been assigned to listen to movie videos in English language and were asked to recall the story. Hence, they had already experienced surfing on YouTube.

Next, the fourth question was about the frequency of YouTube use outside of class. 47% of the students (21 of them) said that they sometimes used YouTube outside of class, while 29%, say 13, and 13%, say 6, of the students said that they often and very often used YouTube outside of class. 4 of them (9%) rarely used YouTube and only 1 student, 2%, said that he/she had never used YouTube outside of class. Since YouTube is considered very entertaining, this could be one of the reasons why this site was very popular amongst the students.

The fifth question inquired the reason for using YouTube. This is shown in Figure 1.

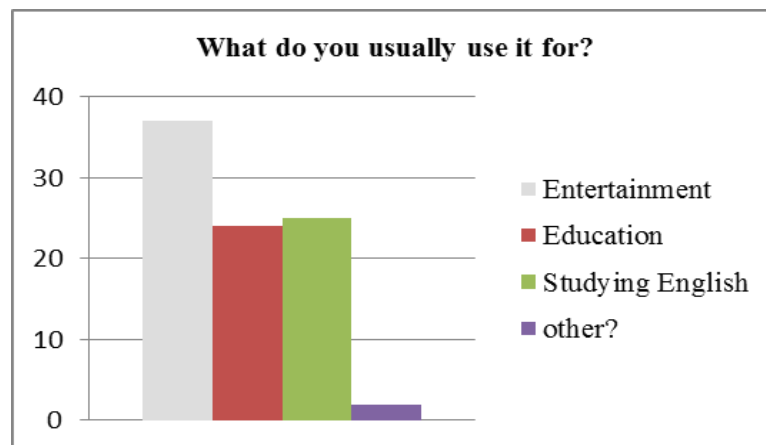


Figure 1. Item no 5.

For many students, entertainment (watching video clips of artists, films, funny videos) became the highest popular reason for them to access YouTube, followed by studying English and educational purposes. Some students specified that the other reasons were for watching sport, such as soccer matches and boxing.

The next question asked the students' opinion if using YouTube materials made class more interesting. This is shown in Figure 2.

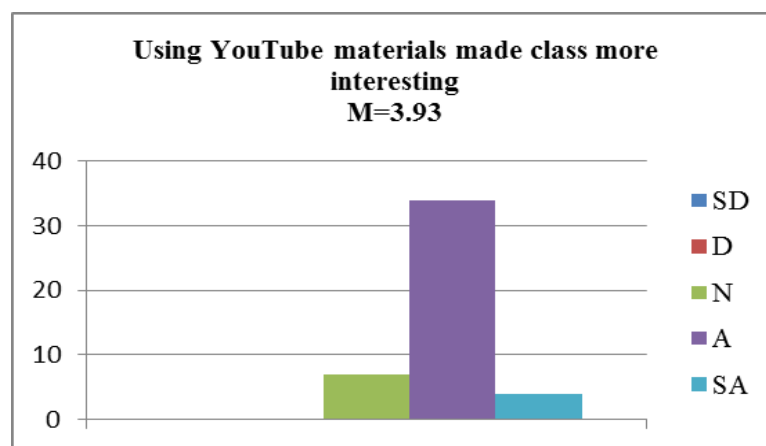


Figure 2. Item no. 6.

Figure 2 shows that no one disagreed that using YouTube was interesting. 16% of the students felt neutral about it whilst a majority of students, 34 in all or 76% agreed that using YouTube made class more interesting. Of the two topics that were assigned to the students, they felt most enthusiastic about John Foppy. They were surprised to see that he did not have arms but he was able to do everything from driving to giving a speech. The language used was quite hard for most students to understand but since they could see the moving pictures, they got the point of what was being told. This is in line with the explanation by Kozma (1991) that the characteristics of audio and visual of a video can make it easy for students to understand and recall the material.

Next, students were asked if the YouTube material assigned to them was relevant to what was studied in class. This is shown in Figure 3.

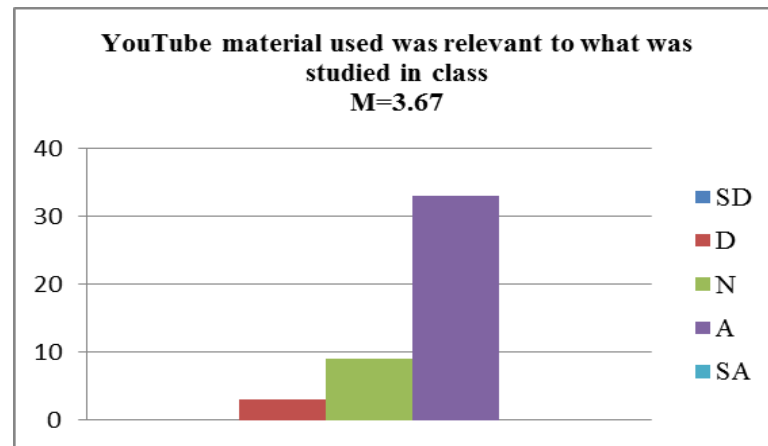


Figure 3. Item no. 7.

A number of 73% of students (33 of them) agreed with this. However there were 9 students (20%) who were unsure about this, while only 3 or 7% of students disagreed that the material was relevant to what was being studied. From the experience, when they were assigned to watch the speech of Mariana Pascal entitled “Malaysian English: standard or local English”, the students were happy that the topic interested them and they were laughing during the video. This topic was relevant to them because Indonesian English also has its own interesting characteristics just like Malaysian English; it is a topic that they could relate to. The other reason was that they were enrolled in a Listening class, so appropriate topics presented in English can be sources to practice their listening.

The eighth question asked about whether or not using YouTube had been beneficial to their English (see Figure 4).

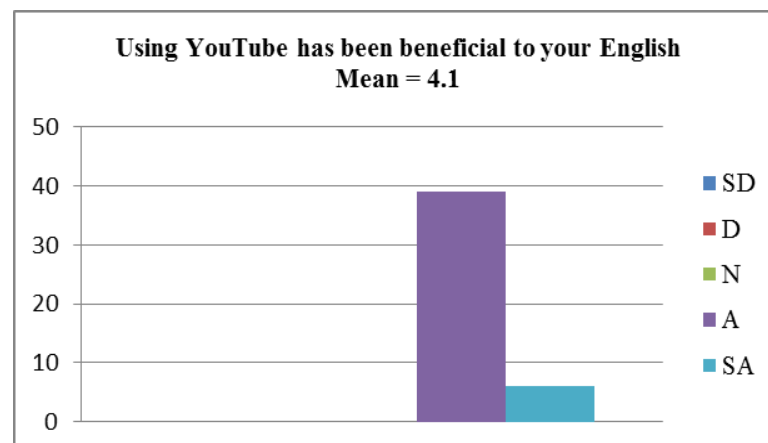


Figure 4. Item no. 8.

Amazingly, 87% of students agreed with this item while the remaining 13% chose ‘strongly agree’ with this item. The richness of movie videos that are available on YouTube made students realize that they could learn from many native speakers’ speech, talk, songs and stories, and further study their intonations and accents. This would enhance their English as well as motivate them to use YouTube in the classroom.

The ninth question asked about whether or not using YouTube in class motivated them to study English. This is shown in Figure 5.

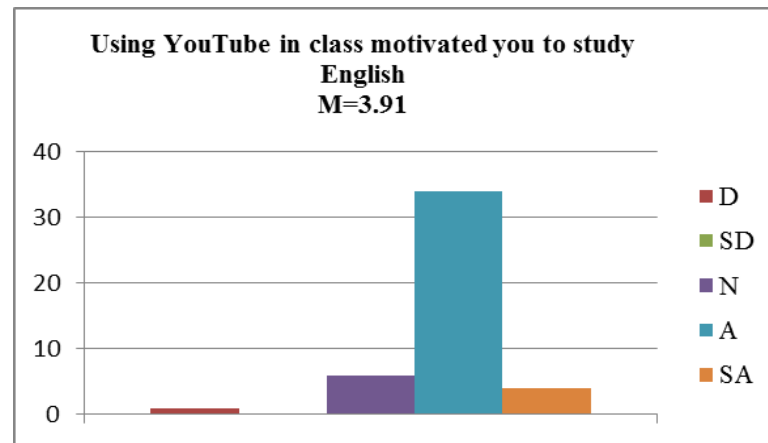


Figure 5. Item no. 9.

From Figure 5, 34 students chose 'agree' with this item. They were motivated to learn English in class when the teacher assigned them to YouTube materials. 4 students chose 'strongly agree', while 6 students had doubts. Only 1 student disagreed that she/he was motivated to learn English from YouTube material.

The last question, question 10, asked their opinion about whether or not using YouTube in class motivated them to study English outside. This is shown in Figure 4.

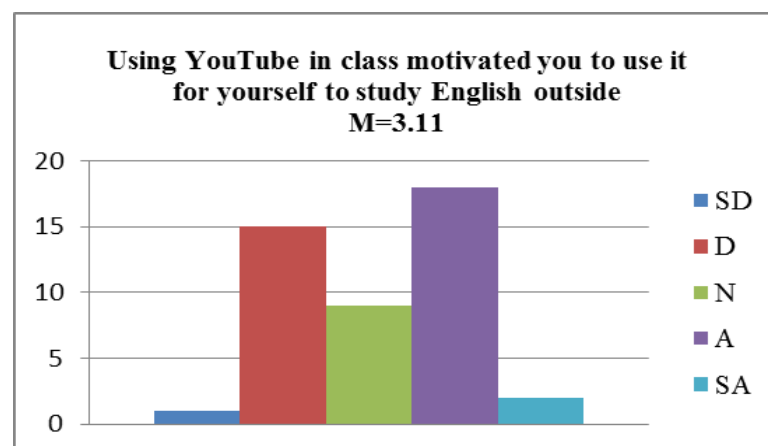


Figure 6. Item no. 10.

Only 18 (40%) and 2 (4%) of the respondents were motivated or strongly motivated to enhance their English language by using YouTube at home. 9 (20%) of students were not sure if they were motivated. Surprisingly, 1 (2%) chose to 'strongly disagree' and 15 (33%) disagreed that they were motivated. This, therefore, raised the question of why they were not motivated to practice their English by using YouTube at home. From the students' responses (see sub-heading 5.2), it was clear that some said they were not assigned homework by the teacher. This made them reluctant to do so, even for their own sake. Besides, limited internet connection was also among the reasons found for not using YouTube.

5.2 Students' Responses to Using YouTube

This section presents the students' responses. It is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the mean score from questions numbers 6 to 10 in the questionnaire, which shows the students' motives from the highest to the lowest ones. The second part deals with the students' written responses obtained from the open questions in the questionnaire.

5.2.1 The Mean Score for Students' Answers for Item Numbers 6 to 10

In this section, the mean score of questionnaire results is presented in Table 2. This aims to give a better picture of the highest and lowest motives for students to use YouTube.

Table 2. Mean score.

No. of items	Statements	Mean
6	Using YouTube materials made class more interesting.	3.93
7	The YouTube material used was relevant to what was studied in class.	3.67
8	Using YouTube in class has been beneficial to your English.	4.1
9	Using YouTube motivated you to study English.	3.91
10	Using YouTube in class motivated you to use it yourself to study English outside of class.	3.11

From Table 2, it is clear that the highest motive for students to use YouTube was that using YouTube in class has been beneficial to their English (item no. 8). Since they were enrolled in a Listening class, they felt that many movies presented in English could be used to enhance their listening skills. The next motive was that using YouTube materials made class more interesting (item no. 6), followed by using YouTube motivated them to study English (item no. 9), and using YouTube was relevant to what was studied in class (item no. 7). As noted in the literature, several implications of using videos have been discussed (See Sub heading 2.2. When students wanted to understand the topic better, they could repeat the video easily and the visual pictures help their comprehension; they would be unable to do this if they just listened to taped materials. When I assigned them to watch the speech by Mariana Pascal, one tried her best to understand the topic as she saw other students were laughing watching the video. The clear pronunciation of Mariana Pascal made them easy to recall the story in the follow up activities.

Next, it was found that the lowest motive for them was related to item no. 10. It had the lowest mean ($M=3.11$). Therefore, this shows that they were not really motivated to use YouTube outside of the class for their own sake. Comparing these results with Kelsen's, the difference lies on the finding that Kelsen's respondents found "YouTube is interesting" to be the main factor, while this study found that "using YouTube is beneficial to their English" to be the main factor reported by the students. However, both studies found that students rated item no. 5 for motivation in using YouTube outside class to be the lowest motive. This is in line with Lamb (2004), who found that only a few students were motivated to practice their L2 at home on their own initiative whilst others only did that just because they were assigned homework.

5.2.2 Students' Written Responses to Using YouTube for Items Numbers 6 to 10

Students' responses were obtained from the answers that they wrote directly on the questionnaire. The students were required to write clear and honest reasons for items nos. 6 to 10. The findings below are not written in rank but chronologically from items nos. 6 to 10.

For item no. 6, most students believed that using YouTube in the listening class was very interesting ($M=3.93$). This is the second higher motive for them. Some excerpts are presented with the grammatical errors left in to show their actual written answers. Their reasons (referred to as "R" in the excerpts) are as follows:

- (R1) *Yes, it is interesting. You know, we can watch the movement of their mouth when they are speaking. So we learn the better pronunciation. (S17)*
- (R2) *Because it is different from usual class. (S30)*
- (R3) *Because there is a picture when we listen. Interesting. (S10)*
- (R4) *Interesting. We can see the native speaker talking. (S41)*

From the excerpts, we can learn that students found it easy and interesting when they practiced listening with YouTube movie videos because at the same time, they could watch the picture. When they did not understand the topic being spoken, they could connect it to the picture and this did help them a lot. As explained by S17 (R1), he tried to learn the pronunciation by looking at the mouth of the speaker. As explained by Tomlinson (2012), this kind of material can be one of eliciting materials which can encourage students to use the target language as well as instructional materials which can guide students to practice the language.

Next, item no. 7 asked the students' opinion about whether the material in YouTube was relevant or not to what was studied in class ($M=3.67$). Some reasons are:

- (R5) *Because I have ever watched in YouTube about motivational John Foppy video in class, that was very interesting and could motivate me because of his story. Not only that I also can improve my listening skill through that one. (S05)*
- (R6) *Because the material make us learn and practice more how to get the information by listening. (S02)*
- (R7) *Because many materials we studied in class are available in YouTube. (S15)*
- (R8) *It is relevant, of course. Because we studied listening and we listen on YouTube, so it is relevant as long as we listen English language. (S32)*

The excerpts above provided the students' reasons on why using YouTube was relevant. Since our class was a listening class and as long as they listened to English, it was relevant even though the video was not specifically constructed for educational purposes. John Foppy, for example, was a video with rapid speech. I observed that some of them had difficulties to follow and understand John Foppy's speech. However, there was a narrator in the video and he spoke at normal speed. This made the students understand the topic. However, there were also a few negative reasons, such as:

- (R9) *Some students' attention will be on video/ pictures, so they can't focus on their listening. (S11)*
- (R10) *Not all video relevant. The recorder just want to be exist. (S13)*

Yet, even though there were negative comments, the class worked well and they participated in class well.

Item no. 8 asked their opinions on whether using YouTube had been beneficial to their English or not. 87% of students agreed to this. This was the highest motive for them. Some reasons are:

- (R11) *Yes it is beneficial. Because it is one of the ways to learn English especially in listening ability and pronunciation. (S41)*
- (R12) *Because we can see on YouTube how cool the way they speak, isn't it? That make me feel want to speak like them all. (S1)*
- (R13) *Because when we use YouTube, we can hear the native speaker speaks more clearly with the picture, so we can improve our listening skill. (S6).*

And a negative response was:

- (R14) *There are some videos which improve my English, but the other videos cannot do that. Because the speaker this video talked too fast, so I can't understand to what the speaker said. (S39)*

Referring to item no. 9, quite a lot of them agreed that using YouTube motivated them to study English (M=3.91)). This is the fourth motive for them. Some excerpts are as follow:

- (R15) *We can share (discuss) the meaning with others. We can get motivation from this. (S43)*
- (R16) *Because it is very good and fun to learn in class. (S4)*
- (R17) *Because by YouTube we can see many interesting things than just focusing in textbook or cassette. (S9)*

A negative response was:

- (R18) *It depends on the video and students can be motivated or not. (S20)*

The last item, item no. 10, was found to have the lowest motive for them to use YouTube (M=3.11). It was about whether or not using YouTube in class motivated them to use it by themselves to study English outside of class. Interestingly, only 44% of students were motivated to use YouTube to improve their listening skill at home. There were many students (33%) that were not interested to do so. Some reasons are:

- (R19) *Because if outside class, I don't have facility to connect internet. (S3)*
- (R20) *I don't have much time to using YouTube, and sometimes it's difficult to connect it. (S7)*
- (R21) *Because often disconnect and teacher rarely give us assignment to see YouTube at home. (S11)*
- (R22) *Only using YouTube when we need or if there is homework. (S23)*
- (R23) *No, I have connection internet at home, but the connection so bad. It's make me lazy to wait buffering the video. (S45).*
- (R24) *I am not motivated to do it alone. (S30)*

Positive responses were:

(R25) *Because even we watch YouTube not for studying English, I accidentally learn English. But it depends on what I watch. When you listen to songs, I can get some vocabulary. I usually learn this way. (S36)*

From the excerpts, it is clear why item no. 10 was the lowest motive for the students. Technical problems were mostly found such as no internet connection or limited access to the internet. Even though students could buy internet packages in quite cheap or reasonable prices, they still had to make additional payments if they wanted to open YouTube or streaming line. This is usually uncovered in the internet packages. Therefore, they did not want to spend money for this. There were also reasons that they would use YouTube whenever they were assigned homework. They would do this because they had to submit the assignment.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The use of video has enabled the students to learn from various interesting videos that are uploaded by many people around the world. In this section, the discussion is presented together with the conclusions.

6.1 Discussion

The use of YouTube appeared to be interesting and beneficial for students in a listening class. The use of YouTube and students' interest had major impacts on their English language learning. They seemed to be very enthusiastic and eager to watch a movie video, then practiced to pronounce words and to speak like the native speakers. Even though the internet connection was sometimes down, but it did not reduce their interest in watching and gaining knowledge from the videos.

However, the weak point appeared when students had to watch and listen to speakers who spoke English very fast. This made their untrained ears to sometimes almost give up in trying to follow the ideas. To overcome this problem, they had to work in pairs to help each other understand the material better because this allowed them to share ideas with each other. This finding is also a reminder for us teachers to do a more thorough pre-observation of the videos that will be used in the classroom. This should include the selection of level of language difficulty used in the video, the accents used, and the topic. They should gradually range from easy to medium and then to difficult ones. So the students will be accustomed to listening to real native speakers in a step by step process.

Another weak point was that the internet connection was sometimes slow or interrupted. Videos stopped whilst being played. This sometimes wasted our time because we had to wait and then play them again. To overcome this problem, our university should have a higher speed internet with larger band width to make it easier for the students to use the latest technology in English language learning. As teachers, we can usually use our own modems as an alternative in the classroom. When the wireless internet in campus became too difficult to use, we connected to the internet by using our own modems. The other alternative is to download the videos from YouTube

before using them in class. Therefore, during class, there is no need to open videos directly from YouTube. Even though this can reduce the students' opportunity to find related videos and read comments, but at least the goal of the listening class from authentic YouTube materials is achieved through the downloaded videos.

6.2 Conclusion

The main purpose of the study was to investigate students' interest to practice listening skills by using YouTube movie videos. The findings revealed that students agree that using YouTube in class is beneficial to their English, interesting, relevant to what was being studied in class, and motivated them in class, but less motivated to use it outside of class. Students were found to be more enthusiastic when they learnt listening skills by using the audio visual materials. Some reasons regarding this were obtained from their written answers such as using YouTube made the class interesting because they could see the native speakers talking, they were motivated to use the materials assigned in the classroom and they could practice the way the native speakers spoke. However, there were also negative reasons for using YouTube outside of class, such reasons were due to not having fast internet at home and they were not assigned homework to use it at home.

Nonetheless, there are some limitations to this study. It only reported the students' interest toward listening practice by using movie videos on YouTube. The research did not cover the activities that happened in the classroom such as the process of negotiation and collaborative work. Furthermore, the students' achievement on whether their listening improved after using YouTube movie videos were also not investigated. Therefore, it is suggested that other researchers who are also interested in educational technology to conduct further in depth research on these matters.

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APPENDIX 1

YouTube Questionnaire

This questionnaire is for research purposes only. All data will be aggregated and will not be used to evaluate you, your grade, or your teacher.

- 1 ☐ Male ☐ Female Age: _____
- 2 Do you have access to a computer with a high-speed connection outside of class?
 ☐ Yes ☐ No
- 3 Have you used YouTube before?
 ☐ Yes ☐ No
- 4 How often do you use YouTube outside of class?
 ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Very often ☐ Never
- 5 When you use YouTube on your own, what do you usually use it for? (You may choose more than one answer)
 ☐ Entertainment ☐ Education ☐ Studying English ☐ Others, (please specify)
- 6 Using YouTube material made class more interesting.
 ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree
- 7 The YouTube material used was relevant to what was studied in class.
 ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree
 Please state why or why not?
- 8 Using YouTube in class has been beneficial to your English?
 ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree
 Please state why or why not?
- 9 Using YouTube in class motivated to study English.
 ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree
 Please state why or why not?
- 10 Using YouTube in class motivated you to use it to yourself to study English outside of class?
 ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree
 Please state why or why not?

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill out this survey.

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Is My Stress Right or Wrong? Studying the Production of Stress by Non-Native Speaking Teachers of English

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Abstract

This study aims at exploring the production of stress by non-native English teachers in Aceh. It also inquiries into how these teachers of English overcame their shortcomings in oral English language teaching. 45 non-native English teachers from Aceh were recorded. They came from four regions in the province of Aceh, namely Aceh Timur, Langsa, Aceh Utara and Aceh Besar. The participants have taught English from five to 15 years. The approach used in this paper is qualitative by focusing on the method of lexical stress analysis suggested by Crystal (1969), Halliday (1970) and McCawley (1986). The study reveals that variations of lexical stresses were produced by the teachers with 13-15 years of teaching experience. Those from Langsa and Aceh Timur produced the most varied stresses. Therefore, it is suggested for future research to conduct a more in-depth study on this topic with a wider sample of participants and more target words. It is also proposed that possible socio-phonological language inferences in the production of English stress by EFL teachers should be explored.

Keywords: Lexical stress, English variation, Acehnese non-native English teachers.

1. INTRODUCTION

Research conducted by Weda (2012) showed that stress in English produced by non-native university students was varied. This means that students produced stress that was not in accordance with Standard English enunciation. Another fact stated by James (2010) reveals that non-native speaking English teachers had difficulties in identifying the stress for two to three syllable words (SW), because they had already learned a specific stress pattern for one syllable words. They also often miss-stressed words with or without suffixes, because they tended to retain the stress for the stem which had been learned earlier. For example, the word *'circulates* is stressed on the first syllable whilst

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the word *circu'lation* is stressed on the third syllable. English stress is either of a noun or of a verb category. Thus, it seems that the teachers do not control English morphological processes, such as conversion, in which one word has two functions, as both a noun and as a verb. The stresses of these two-word pairs are different. If the word is a noun, the stress should be on the first syllable and its final syllable is reduced. If the word functions as a verb, the stress is on the second syllable and its initial syllable is reduced.

In oral English language teaching, teachers are required to be models for their students (Spencer, 2001). English should be understood as an international language which has certain stress patterns (Roach, 2001). In this sense, spoken English has its own patterns which give meaning to daily communication. This means that teachers who are capable of modelling good English speaking patterns will be good models for their students.

In a country where English is a foreign language, such as in Indonesia, English is generally taught formally in every public school by non-native speaking local teachers. This situation encouraged the researcher to conduct a comprehensive research study of lexical stress in English spoken by non-native speaking English teachers who have taught English in public Schools for more than five years and furthermore to discover their efforts to overcome errors in their stress production. Besides, the researcher needed to study findings from previous studies (Fata, 2013). The findings revealed that English teachers from Aceh produced a variety of tonic syllables. The stress produced by these teachers has never been investigated before. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to fill in that research gap.

1.1 Research Questions

The problem to be studied is formulated in the following research question: What variations are there in the lexical stress in English spoken by non-native English teachers (originally Acehnese)?

1.2 Scope of the Study

This research limits its investigation to the production of English lexical stress made by non-native English teachers (originally Acehnese). The research is related to phonology in English, in particular the supra segmental phoneme. Stress variations practised in teaching by non-native speakers is a fascinating phenomenon to study in learning a second language.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 English Lexical Stress

The phenomenon of lexical stress in English has received considerable attention and is probably best described as a word pattern or potential. Halliday (1970) speaks of “word accent” as the potential salience of certain syllables within certain words. Gimson (1980) includes a detailed description of the accentual patterns of English words within his more general treatment of English pronunciation. Fudge (1984)

introduces his book length treatment of English word stress by referring to the way in which one syllable in a given word is picked out or singled out.

On the other hand, the syllable is the point which is marked (McCawley, 1986, p. 113) by the symbol \ showing that the preceding syllable bears the high pitch accent and that the following syllable (if any) drops to a lower level. A word or phrase may also be stressed, where an initial syllable in a word-is low and any syllable before the accent is high).

For examples:

Deli \ ver '*menyampaikan*'
L H L (second syllable stressed)

Hap \ py '*senang*'
H L (first syllable stressed)

Lexical stress in English can serve to differentiate meaning. This means that the stressed syllables in English can differentiate the meaning of two words, such as convict as a noun and convict as a verb. Roach (1987) asks the question of: what are the characteristics of stressed syllables that enable us to identify them? It is important to understand that there are two different ways of approaching this question. One is to consider what the speaker does to produce stressed syllables, and the other is to consider the characteristics of sounds that make a syllable seem to be stressed to a listener. In other words, we can study stress from the point of view of production and also of perception; the two are obviously closely related, but are not identical. The production of stress is generally believed to depend on the speaker who uses more muscular energy to produce stressed syllables compared to that used for unstressed syllables.

Stress is called a supra-segmental phoneme because it can only occur with the segmental phonemes. Stress is defined as "the degree of force used in the production of a syllable" (Crystal, 2003, p. 435). This force of emphasis is put on certain words (or certain syllables within words). Ladefoged (1982) defines stress as a supra-segmental feature of utterances; it applies not to individual vowels and consonants but to the whole syllables-whatever they might be. A stressed syllable is pronounced with a greater amount of energy than an unstressed syllable.

Stress is a term that we apply to syllables in isolation in words which have more than one syllable. It refers to the property that certain syllables carry which makes them stand out from the rest of the word. It seems certain that stressed syllables are made with more effort than unstressed ones; the muscles used seem to expel air more aggressively than for unstressed syllables (Birjandi, 2005).

In a study by Chung (2006), it is noted that the sequence in which the minimal pairs are presented might confuse readers, leading them to pronounce each of the contrastive phonemes in the same way. As Chung (2006) states:

Readers often hesitate when confronted with a large number of similar words out of context, and they may either make a special effort to distinguish the words in a way they usually do not do when reading or speaking contextually. Some may, for

example, add unaccustomed vowel lengthening to distinguish the word. (Chung, 2006, p. 2)

Roach (1987) argues that in order to decide on stress placement, it is necessary to make use of some or all of the following information:

- Whether the word is morphologically simple, or whether it is complex as a result of containing one or more affixes (that is, prefixes or suffixes).
- The grammatical category to which the word belongs (noun, verb, adjective, etc.).
- The number of syllables in the word:

If the stress is dissyllabic, stress is normally penultimate.

For examples:

‘ozone
‘Arab
‘permit
‘import

If the words are verbs, the basic rule is that: if the second syllable of the verb contains a long vowel or diphthong, or if it ends with more than one consonant, the second syllable is stressed.

For examples:

Ap \ ply ‘mendaftar’
H L

Ar \ rive ‘tiba’
H L

Below is the example of the production of stress from Crystal (1979, p. 59).

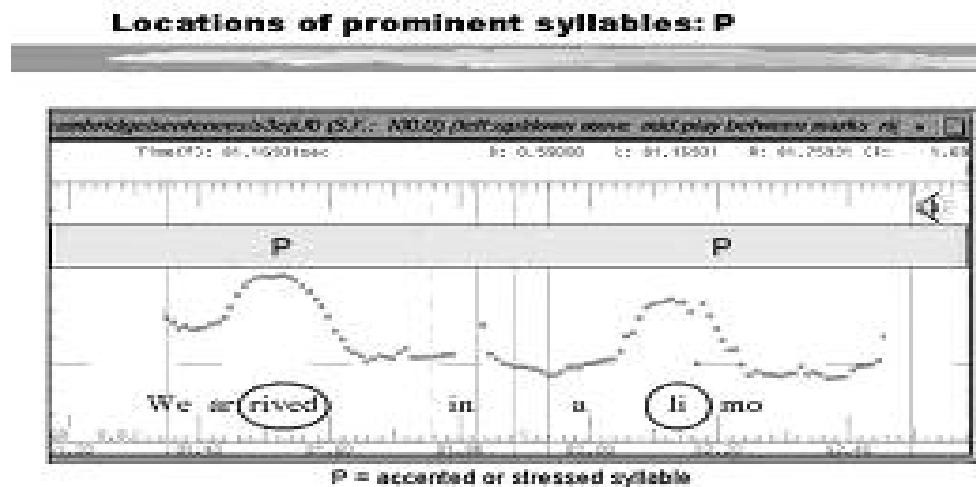


Figure 1. The production of stress on the word “arrived” in Praat spectrogram by a native speaker from Crystal (1979, p. 59).

If the final syllable contains a short vowel and one (or no final consonants), the first syllable is stressed.

For examples:

e \ qual
H L

en \ vy
H L

A final syllable is also unstressed if it contains /əʊ/.

For examples:

Fol low '*mengikuti*'
H L

Bor row '*meminjam*'
H L

If the SP is trisyllabic, its stress is either penultimate or antepenultimate, depending on a number of factors, such as:

- i) if the final syllable is strong, it means that the final syllable gets emphasis, so stress falls on the second syllable back from that syllable, i.e. the third syllable from the end of the word, as in the examples below:

'antelope
'cucumber

If the final syllable is weak, it means that the final syllable does not get emphasis. If the penultimate syllable is strong, then it is stressed as in the examples below:

ve'randah
spa'ghetti

- ii) If the penultimate syllable is weak, then the syllable before it is stressed, as in the examples below:

a'sparagus
A'merica

In verbs, if the last syllable contains a short vowel and ends with not more than one consonant, that syllable will be unstressed and stress will be placed on the penultimate. For examples:

en'counter
de'terminate

Wang (2004, p. 66) tells that stress in enunciating words in English has not received enough consideration either from teachers or students, and this concern starts

at the beginning of their teaching and learning. No pertinent tests are made and there are no specific requirements for them to achieve in this matter. Students lack practice in producing stress in speaking English and they may believe that their stress is not standard which may inhibit them from speaking English in class. Even though they may perform well, they may still lack confidence and require confirmation from their teachers to better encourage their learning in particular in practicing speaking English.

English language teachers often believe that the teaching of English stress belongs in the beginning of learning to speak English. When the opportunities for practicing stress in English are reduced, the results will be in a deficiency in the teaching of English (Li, 2010). The mistaken practice of paying more attention to vocabulary than to English stress is universal. Thus, it is important to remind and guide students to practice stress in English in teaching speaking English by teachers of English language (Xu & Cao, 2012).

3. METHOD

The study employed descriptive qualitative research. The participants in this research were 45 female English language teachers with from five to 15 years' experience in teaching English. There were ten teachers from Aceh Timur, 12 teachers from Langsa, 12 teachers from Aceh Utara, and 11 teachers from Aceh Besar. The teachers have never been abroad.

The researcher obtained the English lexical stress data by having a recorded conversation with each participant. They were each given pictures that explained the target words. Then, the researcher conversed with the informants whilst using the pictures. She used probing questions about the pictures to get each participant to produce the target words. The data was recorded using a Samsung Galaxy note 10.1 tape recorder. This data was then stored at mp4 resolution of 640*480 bytes. The study used 20 disyllabic stress words (ten nouns and ten verbs) and 20 trisyllabic stress words (ten nouns and ten verbs) for each participant, totalling 900 disyllabic and 900 trisyllabic words with stress.

The recorded data were then transferred to PRAAT software version 4.4.20 (Boersma & Weenink, 2006). The spectrograms produced show tracings for the graphical stress variation for every target word produced by each participant. Each spectrogram was printed to better read the tracing. These graphs helped in interpreting the sounds recorded and helped to identify difficult parts of the sounds or pitch variances. The data were analyzed based on the standard stress production described by Crystal (1969), Halliday (1970) and McCawley (1986).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

This section consists of findings and discussion. The findings are shown in the tables as follows.

Table 1. Lexical stress variation.

<i>Lexical stress</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Dissyllabic	675	75%
Trisyllabic	720	80%

Table 2. Dissyllabic stress variation.

<i>Dissyllabic</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Verb	573	85%
Noun	102	15%
Total	675	100%

Table 3. Trisyllabic stress variation.

<i>Trisyllabic</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Verb	216	30%
Noun	504	70%
Total	720	100%

Table 1 shows that in dissyllabic stress variation, there were 675 (75%) variations from the 900 total words. This means that the informants produced 675 different stress patterns. It also shows that for trisyllabic stress variation, there were 720 (80%) variations from the 900 words. These informants were from Aceh Timur and Langsa.

Table 2 shows that for the dissyllabic words there were 573 verbs and 102 nouns with stress variations from the 675 total of words. Thus the participants produced more different stress variations in verbs than in nouns. These participants came from Aceh Timur and Langsa.

Table 3 shows that for the trisyllabic words there were 216 verbs and 504 nouns with stress variations from the 720 total of words. Thus these participants produced more stress variations in nouns than in verbs. These informants were also from Aceh Timur and Langsa. Some examples from the data are shown below.

4.1.1 Dissyllabic Words

Stress shifts to two-syllable words which contain a short vowel and a (or no) final consonant to its syllables; here the first syllable should be stressed. However, the participants in the study stressed the final syllable, instead.

Excerpt 1:

Wrong stress:

en'vy
per'mit
o'zone

Correct stress:

ˈenvy
ˈpermit
ˈozone

Excerpt 2:

Standard by McCawley (1986)

\ e qual 'persamaan'
H L

Thirty informants produced the word as follow:

e \ qual 'persamaan'
L H

Another word is:

Excerpt 3:

Standard by Crystal (1969)

Ap \ ply 'mendafiar'
L H

The 32 non-native teachers of English produced the word differently. They used low stress tone for the second syllable. That is why their production is called varied.

4.1.2 Trisyllabic Words

If the word is trisyllabic or longer, it is either penultimate or antepenultimate, depending on a number of factors. From the data, the informants produced stress wrongly for most trisyllabic words.

Excerpt 4:

Standard by Halliday (1990):

Deli \ ver 'menyampaikan'
L H L (second syllable stressed)

Thirty one informants produced it as:

\ De li ver 'menyampaikan'
H L L (first syllable stressed)

From the data, it was found that for three syllable (trisyllabic) words, participants tend to speak it by producing high tone in the first syllable and this is the opposite of the standard pattern where high tone is produced on the second syllable. These informants were from Langsa (11 teachers), Aceh Timur (six teachers) and Aceh Utara (three teachers).

However, if the words are verbs, the basic rule is that if the second syllable of the verb contains a long vowel or diphthong, or if it ends with more than one consonant, the second syllable is stressed. For instance 'arrive', it should not be stressed in the final syllable and the preceding syllable bears the high pitch accent of the first.

The data showed that the informants made efforts to distinguish the words in a way they usually did not do when reading or speaking contextually (Chung, 2006). Some may, for example, add unaccustomed vowel lengthening to distinguish them.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Variations in English lexical stress made by non-native teachers of English in Aceh were studied. The most variations were in two-syllable verbs spoken by teachers from Aceh Timur and Langsa. The most variations found in three-syllable nouns were also, spoken by teachers from Aceh Timur and Langsa. The study compared what the speaker does in producing stressed syllables with the traits of the syllables that should be stressed. Since the dissimilar stress produced by the participants didn't lead to different meanings, therefore, this was considered as a unique characteristic of their stress production.

Language is dynamic and in terms of stress, there is no right or wrong way of producing stress. In fact, as shown in this study, there is variation in stress. The variation of placement of stress in English takes place on the first, second or last syllable.

This study found that the most variations in stress patterns were produced by teachers from Aceh Timur and Langsa. Since words in English have more stress patterns and a number of rules governing these patterns compared to Bahasa Indonesia and Acehnese, therefore, teachers who teach English as a foreign language should at least know these rules in order to teach their students the appropriate stress. Due to limitations of this study in terms of number of participants, the number of target words and the time available, therefore, it is suggested that future research could conduct a more in-depth study of this topic with a more participants and more targets words. It is also suggested to explore possible socio-phonological language factors involved in the production of stress in English spoken and taught by EFL teachers.

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