


Analysis of Elementary School Students' Difficulties in Mastering Basic English Sentence Structure: on To Be, Verbs, Adverbs, Nouns, Subject Pronouns and Possessive Adjectives

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ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggambarkan secara mendalam berbagai kesulitan yang dialami oleh siswa Sekolah Dasar (SD) dalam menguasai struktur kalimat Bahasa Inggris dasar. Fokus utama penelitian ini diarahkan pada analisis mendalam terhadap kesulitan siswa pada penggunaan to be, verbs, adverb, nouns, subject pronoun, dan possessive adjective melalui metode wawancara kepada guru-guru Bahasa Inggris di tingkat sekolah dasar. Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing yang mulai diajarkan sejak dini diharapkan dapat membentuk landasan kompetensi berbahasa yang kuat bagi siswa. Namun dalam kenyataannya, banyak siswa mengalami berbagai hambatan dalam memahami serta menerapkan struktur dasar kalimat Bahasa Inggris secara tepat. Melalui pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, data dikumpulkan dengan metode utama wawancara mendalam kepada guru-guru Bahasa Inggris yang mengajar di kelas V Sekolah Dasar. Wawancara dirancang untuk mengungkap pengalaman empiris guru dalam mengidentifikasi jenis kesulitan yang dialami siswa, frekuensi kesalahan yang terjadi, serta respons pedagogis yang mereka lakukan. Hasil wawancara menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar siswa mengalami kebingungan dalam menentukan bentuk to be yang tepat sesuai subjek, sulit memahami perubahan bentuk kata kerja dalam berbagai tense, serta kesulitan membedakan antara subject pronoun dan possessive adjective. Kesalahan umum juga terjadi pada penempatan adverb serta kekeliruan dalam penggunaan bentuk plural nouns. Faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi antara lain latar belakang siswa yang belum terbiasa dengan tata bahasa asing, kurangnya media pembelajaran yang kontekstual, serta pendekatan mengajar yang masih bersifat tradisional. Penelitian ini memberikan rekomendasi agar guru diberikan pelatihan tambahan dalam menyampaikan materi grammar secara komunikatif dan kontekstual, serta pentingnya pengembangan media pembelajaran yang lebih visual dan interaktif agar siswa dapat lebih mudah memahami konsep abstrak dalam struktur kalimat Bahasa Inggris.

This study aims to thoroughly describe the various difficulties experienced by elementary school students in mastering basic English sentence structure. The primary focus is an in-depth analysis of student challenges related to the use of to be, verbs, adverbs, nouns, subject pronouns, and possessive adjectives. Data were obtained using a descriptive qualitative approach, with the primary method being interviews with English teachers in elementary schools. English is introduced early in Indonesian education in hopes of building strong linguistic competence. However, many students struggle with applying fundamental grammar concepts. In-depth interviews were conducted with fifth-grade English teachers to uncover their experiences in recognizing student difficulties, the frequency of common errors, and their instructional responses. Findings show that many students have difficulty determining the appropriate form of to be for different subjects, understanding verb conjugations across tenses, and distinguishing between subject pronouns and possessive adjectives.

Common errors were also noted in the placement of adverbs and plural noun usage. Influencing factors include a lack of prior exposure to foreign language grammar, limited contextual teaching media, and traditional instructional methods. The study recommends that teachers receive additional training to present grammar in a more communicative and contextualized manner, and emphasizes the need for more visual and interactive learning media to support student comprehension.



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INTRODUCTION

Background English is an international language that has an important role in various aspects of global life. In Indonesia, English teaching has started since the elementary school level as an effort to prepare a generation that is able to compete in the era of globalization. Good command of English, especially in terms of basic sentence structure, is the main foundation for students to develop more complex language skills at the next level of education.

However, in reality, many elementary school students have difficulty understanding the structure of English sentences. These difficulties include the use of auxiliary verbs (to be), main verbs (verbs), adverbs (adverbs), nouns (nouns), subject pronouns (subject pronouns), and possessive adjectives (possessive adjectives). The mistakes that occur are systematic and show that there is a gap between the material taught and the student's understanding. Often, students are unable to connect grammatical concepts with their application in sentences. As a result, students experience obstacles in developing writing and speaking skills in English.

Teachers as learning facilitators have an important role in recognizing and overcoming these difficulties. Through interviews with teachers, in-depth information can be obtained about the forms of difficulties that students most often experience, the main causes of these difficulties, and the strategies that have and can be applied to overcome them.

English Sentence Structure Sentence structure in English is a word structure that forms a complete and meaningful idea. In the basic structure of English sentences, the commonly used pattern is Subject + Verb + Object. To be able to form the correct sentence, students must understand the function and form of each of these components, including to be, verbs, adverbs, nouns, subject pronouns, and possessive adjectives.

1. To Be

To Be is one of the most basic aspects of English grammar used to express existence or state. At the elementary school level, the forms to be learned are am, is, and are. Common mistakes occur when students use shapes that don't fit the subject, such as "They are" or "He are". This error is usually caused by a lack of understanding of subject-predicate rules and the habit of translating directly from Indonesian.

2. Verbs

Verbs denote an action or situation. Verbs have a form that changes depending on the tense and subject. In English, many verbs are irregular verbs, which cause students to have difficulty memorizing and applying them. Students often use the basic form (infinitive) without paying attention to time, such as using "go" to tell a past event without changing it to "went".

3. Adverbs

Adverbs describe verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. There are different types of adverbs such as adverbs of manner, place, time, and frequency. Common mistakes are improper adverb placement in a sentence or the use of inappropriate adverb types, such as "He quickly runs every morning" to "He runs every quickly morning."

4. Nouns

Nouns refer to the name of a person, place, thing, or idea. In English, students need to understand the difference between countable and uncountable nouns, as well as the rules of pluralization. It is often

found that students add -s to nouns that cannot be counted or do not convert the singular form into a plural according to the rules.

5. Subject Pronoun dan Possessive Adjective

Subject pronouns replace subjects in sentences such as I, you, he, she, it, we, and they. While possessive adjectives denote possessions such as my, your, his, her, its, our, and their. A common mistake is a function swap, such as using "he book" for "his book", or "my is pencil" for "this is my pencil."

Krashen's Language Acquisition Theory (1982) proposes a language acquisition theory that states that second language learning occurs through exposure to comprehensible inputs. Vygotsky also emphasized the importance of social interaction and the role of teachers in the student's proximal developmental zone.

METHODS

Approaches and Types of Research This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive type of research. The main focus of the research was to dig deep into teachers' perceptions of students' difficulties through in-depth interviews.

Research Subject The research subjects are three English teachers from three different elementary schools in the Yogyakarta City area who teach grade V students.

Data Collection Techniques Data is collected through:

1. In-Depth Interviews: The questions are focused on the teacher's experience in teaching basic sentence structure, the types of mistakes students make most often, and the teacher's efforts in overcoming them.
2. Documentation: The researcher also collected examples of student practice results and teacher evaluation notes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the interviews showed that all of the teachers interviewed stated that students had the greatest difficulty distinguishing the form to be by subject, such as errors in the sentences "They are my friend" or "I am happy." The teacher stated that this obstacle occurred because students did not understand that different subjects demanded different forms of to-be. The teacher also said that they often repeat this material repeatedly in various exercises.

Another difficulty that is often found is the use of verbs, especially when making sentences in the past tense. For example, students use "go" in the context of past stories that should use "went." The teacher admitted that students often make mistakes because they do not understand the concept of changing the form of a verb based on time.

For subject pronouns and possessive adjectives, students are often mistaken because they are unable to distinguish the functions of the two. In interviews, teachers stated that students often interpret "his" and "he" as the same thing and don't realize that one is a pronoun and the other is an ownership adjective.

The use of adverbs is also a challenge because students do not understand the position and function of adverbs in sentences. Teachers admit that students often put adverbs in inappropriate places or mix adverbs with other types of words.

Factors that cause difficulties include:

1. Students' limited understanding of sentence patterns in English.
2. Lack of structured exercises that distinguish between word types.
3. Learning media that is still limited to textbooks.
4. Minimal use of English in daily interactions.

Teachers' efforts to overcome these difficulties include repetition of material, providing focused exercises, using visual media (images and videos), and making grammar games.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that elementary school students face various difficulties in understanding the basic sentence structure of English, especially in the aspects of to be, verbs, adverbs, nouns, subject pronouns, and possessive adjectives. Interviews with teachers showed that students' mistakes were caused by limited basic grammar understanding, lack of contextual media use, and lack of practice-oriented learning.

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