

# AN ANALYSIS ON STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN THE USE OF PLURAL “-S” FORM AND SIMPLE PRESENT MARKER “-S”

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## **Abstract**

This research entitled An Analysis on Students' Difficulties in the use of Plural “-s” Form and Simple Present Marker “-s” are to identify the difficulties that the students face in using marker –s in plural form and in simple present tense. This research method was a descriptive research with the sample the first semester students of Mathematic Education study program. The sample of this research consist of 56 students from class A morning and 22 students from class B morning, so the total sample were 78 students. The tools used in the research were a test and a questionnaire. From the data analysis it was found that the students average score was 45.6 which categorized as poor. The score then indicates that the students have difficulties in the use of plural “-s” form and simple present tense marker ‘-s’. The result from questionnaire also showed that more than 60% agree that the students face difficulties in using marker –s in plural form and infinitive in simple present tense.

**Keywords:** Students' Difficulties, Plural “-s” Form, Simple Present Marker “-s”

## **Abstrak**

*Penelitian ini berjudul Suatu Analisa pada Kesulitan Mahasiswa pada Penggunaan Bentuk Jamak “-s” dan Simple Present bertanda “-s” untuk mengidentifikasi kesulitan-kesulitan yang dihadapi mahasiswa dalam penggunaan –s dalam bentuk plural dan bentuk –s dalam bentuk simple present. Metode penelitian ini adalah penelitian deskriptif dengan sampel mahasiswa semester pertama pada Prodi Pendidikan Matematika. Sampel penelitian ini terdiri dari 56 mahasiswa dari kelas A Pagi dan 22 mahasiswa dari kelas B Pagi, maka total sampel adalah 78 mahasiswa. Alat penelitian yang digunakan adalah tes dan angket. Dari analisa data ditemukan nilai rata-rata mahasiswa adalah 45.6 berkategori kurang. Yang mana mengindikasikan bahwa siswa memiliki kesulitan dalam penggunaan bentuk jamak –s dan bentuk simple present bertanda –s. Hasil dari angket juga menunjukkan bahwa lebih dari 60% setuju bahwa mereka mengalami kesulitan dalam penggunaan bentuk jamak –s dan bentuk simple present bertanda –s*

**Kata Kunci:** Kesulitan Mahasiswa, Bentuk Plural –s, bentuk Simple Present bertanda –s.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Having difficulties in learning a language especially in English is common for foreign learners. It is happen because they learn another language which different from their mother tongue. Beside that, the learners tend to think that grammar or structure in english are difficult subject to learn. The difficultes in

pronunciation and mastering vocabulary also becoming the factors that influence the students' difficulties in learning English.

In Learning English was supported by grammar, beside another elements that should be learnt by English learner. For many years ago the material of English was emphasized on the structure of language, the students were hoped be able to recall the pattern of tenses. According to Gerot and Wignell (1994 : 3) we need a theory of grammar or language which helps us understand how texts work. It is important to know how texts work so the learners can explicitly learn how to understand and produce the spoken and written text in various contexts for various purposes.

In English grammar, words have traditionally been classified into parts of speech; nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs are the four largest groups. The words of language, depending on various formal and semantic features, are divided into grammatically relevant classes. The traditional grammatical classes of words are called "parts of speech." Sasse (1993) said that analysis of syntactic categories was familiar to the traditional grammarians under the title part of speech. While according to Croft (1991) noun, verb, and adjective is syntactic categories which renamed as parts of speech.

Both of the grammar or the vocabulary are linked to produce the spoken and written text. In studying English for the beginners, it is quite difficult to differentiate between verb in simple present tense and noun in plural form. In regular form both of them are added with -s or -es. Many students confuse whether the word that should be added with -s or -es were noun or verb. While it is very important for the students to differentiate both of verb in simple present tense and noun in plural form.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher found that some students of the first semester students of Mathematic Education study program IKIP PGRI Pontianak face difficulties in differentiate to use marker -s or -es in simple present tense and the use of -s in plural form. In the other hand, one of the standart competence that the students have to achieve is the students were

expected to be able. But it seems that the student often misused the –s marked to the verb or to noun.

In conclusion, the researcher conduct a reasearch which was aimed to find out whether the students face difficulties in the use of plural –s or –es and the simple present marker –s or –es. It s very important to find out the students difficulties in order to find the best way to overcome the problem during the teaching ad learning process in english subject.

The purpose of this study was to identify the difficulties in the use of Plural “-s or -es” Form and Simple Present Marker “-s or -es” faced by the first semester students of Mathematic education study program in IKIP PGRI Pontianak.

According to Lado (1961: 141) grammar is the study of rules that are claimed to tell the students what he should and should not say in order to speak language of the social educated class. It is very important to use the rules in every spoken and written english, especialy in classroom. Since grammar are very important especially in written language.

Cook and Sutter (1980: 1) states that grammar is a set of rules by which people speak and write. This statement clarify that to use the language properly, it needs grammar as the rules to make the communication runs appropriately.

The rules are not always understood conciously, because most of the learners thinks that rules or grammar in english are something more difficult rather than able to use the language it self. Then, based on the explanation above can be concluded that grammar is rules of how words and their component parts are combined to make sentences in written and orally.

It is very important for English Language learners to master grammar since grammar is one of the important aspect to master communicative skills. An english language learner can be said mastering english competences if the learners fulfills two main requirements, namely accuracy or correctnes and fluency (Allen and Widdowson, 1975). Accuracy refers to the mastery of grammatical structures, and fluency indicates that the learner can use the target language.

Many experts also explain about the importance of grammar. Canale and Swain (1980: 27) consider grammatical concept as a basis of the communicative

competence. In addition, Harmer (1991: 22) state that grammatical knowledge is very important for learners who want to have communicative competence.

Although grammar is not the highest priority, it does not mean that grammar should be neglected in teaching and learning process. Grammar is the basic knowledge and skill for understanding and using the language naturally. Grammar is the rules by which words can change their forms and can be combined into sentences, it can be said that grammar plays an important role in how learner can master a language. It will be difficult for the learners to arrange sentences or utterance without learning grammar properly. When the learners do not have good comprehension and competence in arranging the sentences it is impossible for the learners to be able to master English.

According to Lado (2008: 7) Tenses is forms of verb which indicates the change of time. It's mean that the difference of time could influence the form of verb which used in a sentence. In other words the changing of verb form in a sentence is caused by the changing of time or adverb of time.

In English there are four main groups of tenses which form 16 different form of time. The 16 form of times which listed by Lado (2008: 7-8) are as follows: (1) Present Tense. They are Simple Present Tense, Present Continuous Tense, Present Perfect Tense, and Present Perfect Continuous Tense; (2) Past Tense. They are Simple Past Tense, Past Continuos Tense, Past Perfect Tense, and Past Perfect Continuous Tense; (3) Future Tense. They are Simple Future Tense, Future Continuous Tense, Future Perfect Tense, and Future Perfect Continuous Tense; and (4) Future Past Tense. They are Future Past Tense, Future Past Continuous Tense, Future Past Perfect Tense, and Future Past Perfect Continuous Tense.

Simple Present tense could be define as the sentences with the form of time in present, habitual or reality. Lado (2008: 8) defines Simple Present tense as the form of time which is used to tells an action or activity occur or happen in present time in simple form, or activity which happen over and over again, or daily activity, or event or daily act which do not related with time.

In positive verbal sentence the pattern used is the subject followed with infinitive or verb 1. For the subject “he, she, and it” the infinitive are added with mark –s or –es. According to Lado (2008: 9) there are some rules in adding –s or –es mark to the infinitive, there are: (1) Basically the infinitive in simple present tense directly added with –s mark at the end of the verb as set-sets, shine-shines, etc; (2) The infinitive with ending “ch, o, s, sh, x, and z” are added with –es mark. As the example for kiss-kisses, fix-fixes, do-does, etc; (3) The infinitive with the ending “y” and preceded with consonant, then the ending “y” will change into “i” and will be added “-es” mark. The example of this form of verb are fly-flies, study-studies, carry-carries, etc; and (4) When the infinitive was started with modal, then the infinitive will be not added with –s or –es mark. The example are must close, can read, must work, etc.

According to Simons (1997) Nouns are words that identify the whos, wheres, and whats in language. Nouns name people, places, and things. Simons (1997) also added that nouns can function as subjects, direct objects, indirect objects, objects of prepositions, and subject complements.

Simon also stated that nouns have different classes: proper and common, concrete and abstract, count and noncount, and collective. Many nouns can be singular or plural; these are count nouns. Noncount nouns, on the other hand, have only a singular form; to make them plural is illogical. The example are as follow: (1) Jenice ate three apples with her two brothers. (Apples and brothers are count noun); and (2) Jenice got severe indigestion. (indigestion is noncount).

Plural took from Latin language, pluralis, adjective from “plus”, “pluris”, it means “more”, + adjective suffix “-alis”, Beard (1995). Plural as a grammar is a word in the form in which it potentially refers to something other than one person or thing, and other than two things if the language has a dual form. In English, make a distinction between singular and plural, for example distinguishes between “a house” and “houses” or “man” and “men”. And sometimes we use plural noun for one thing that has two part “trousers” (that have two legs) (Murphy, 1994 : 156).

As the above discussion an example show, plural noun are formed from singular nouns in different ways. The following are some guidelines the majority of English count nouns are regular, add -s to the end of the singular form or -es to those singulars that end in s, z, ch, sh, x, o.

**Table 1. Regular Nouns**

<b>Singular Noun</b>	<b>Plural -s Noun</b>	<b>Singular Noun</b>	<b>Plural -es Noun</b>
A table	Tables	Class	Classes
A boy	Boys	Watch	Watches
A book	Books	Box	Boxes
A day	Days	Mango	Mangoes

However if the singular ends with -y and the -y is not preceded by a vowel the -y changes to -i and the plural become -ies.

**Table 2. Regular Noun with ending -y**

<b>Singular noun</b>	<b>Plural -ies noun</b>
A library	Libraries
A dictionary	dictionaries
A candy	Candies

Outside of this pattern, however, are several nouns which are irregular in the spelling. Some nouns that end in -f or -fe are changed to -ves in the plural:

**Table 3. Regular Nouns with Ending -f/-fe**

<b>Singular noun</b>	<b>Plural -ves noun</b>
A knife	Knives
A leaf	Leaves
A wolf	Wolves

Some plural nouns have the irregular form that different with singular nouns.

**Table 4. Irregular Noun**

<b>Singular</b>	<b>Irregular Plural</b>
A child	Children
A man	Men
A foot	Feet

According to DeKeyser (2005: 18) grammatical difficulty to three factors: problems of meaning, problems of form, and problems of form-meaning mapping. DeKeyser said that the meaning expressed through a grammatical form can be difficult to learn due to its “novelty, abstractness, or a combination of both”. While the problems of form could come from (a) the contains non-essential communicative meaning (b) its use is optional, and (c) it s form-meaning relationship is obscure (for example, one meaning is expressed by multiple forms, or one form has multiple meanings).

The morpheme –s in English represents a case of obscure form-meaning relationship; it can be used to signify a third-person singular verb, a plural noun, or the genitive of a noun. Its obscure form-meaning relationship may cause learning difficulties.

Learning simple present tense seldom tricks the students to confuse. Because there is different form of verb between the first /second person and the third singular person as subject in sentence. For example:

I /they **eat** fried rice. (first/second person)

She/he **eats** fried rice. (third singular person)

The use of “s” between two verbs above cannot differentiate the person as a subject especially in sentence, which person that must put the suffix “s” or “es” in verb. It might be the one of the difficulties of students to understand the use “s” or “es” in simple present clearly.

Paradis (2009) concluded in her article that there are two weaknesses for foreign learners; (1) learners are significantly less accurate in production with tense than with non-tense morphemes, (2) learners tend to make errors of

omission with grammatical morphemes (dropping them) much more often than errors of commission (applying morphemes in the wrong place, for example “you eats” or using wrong morphemes for example “they is” instead of “they are”)

Grammatical number has many kinds aspects too, such as plural form; a form that changing one thing into 2 or more things. Many students have trouble using English plural because the formation is so different in Indonesia. In Indonesian language, plural is formed by one of two methods.

Doubling a noun : buku = a book; buku-buku = books

Use of a quantifier : orang = a person; dua orang = two people

Students very frequently create English sentences using singular nouns which should obviously be plural, unconsciously assuming that reader/listener will hear a plural meaning, just as she/he naturally does.

## **METHOD**

Descriptive research as the method in this research. The purpose is to describe systematically the facts and characteristics of a given population or area of interest, factually and accurately (Isaac and Michael, 1980:18). It is also supported by Whitney (1960:160) descriptive research is finding the fact with correctly interpretation. Other statement from Nazir (1983 : 63) descriptive study as studying the problems in the environment, the system, certain situation, include the relation of some activities, attitudes, views or opinions, processes that is happening and also influences of a phenomena.

The sample of this research were the first semester students of Mathematic education study program IKIP PGRI Pontianak. The sample consist 56 students from class A morning and 22 students from class B morning. The researcher took the sample by using purposive sampling technique. The sample was taken because the researcher will teach english in these two classes. In order to make the teaching and learning process run smoothly, the researcher need to find out the difficulties that the students face in grammar, especially in differentiate the use –s or –es in plural form and the infinitive in simple present tense.



The technique of data analysis in this research were measurement and survey to analyze the test result and the questionnaire. According to Gavin (1996: 45-49) measurement refers to the assessment, estimation, observation, evaluation, appraisal or judgment of an event. Measurement in research (also considered a dependent variable) is the process of assigning numerals to objects to represent quantities of characteristics according to certain rules. Those involved in conducting a study must choose the most appropriate measurement scale.

According to Fellegi (2003: 2) A survey is any activity that collects information in an organised and methodical manner about characteristics of interest from some or all units of a population using well-defined concepts, methods and procedures, and compiles such information into a useful summary form . A survey can be thought to consist of several interconnected steps which include: defining the objectives, selecting a survey frame, determining the sample design, designing the questionnaire, collecting and processing the data, analysing and disseminating the data and documenting the survey.

The data collection was taken by using a test to know the level of difficulties that the students face dealing with the use mark –s or –es in plural form and in simple present tense. The test item consist of 20 items, which divided into 10 items for simple present tense and 10 items for plural form. The second tool was the questionnaire to find out the difficulties face by the students in using mark –s or –es in plural form and in simple present tense. The test was used to find the students' average score, while the questionnaire was used to find out the students' difficulties in grammar especially in the use of plural “-s” form and simple present tense marker ‘-s’.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

From the result of the average students' total score which is 45.6, it can be concluded that the students' difficulties in the use of plural “-s” form and simple present tense marker ‘-s’ to the first semester students of Mathematic education study program IKIP PGRI Pontianak in academic year 2015/2016 was categorized as poor.

To the small element is inflectional word or word endings. This element is found in noun and tense markers. There are some noun and tense markers in English that must be understood by the students. Two of them are the using of suffix -s or -es, both markers of simple present tense and plural noun. Those markers lead students to be able to describe events or activities in different time and to mention the number of noun form. But not all the students can understand the markers' use. They faced some difficulties in using those markers. Because they cannot differentiate which word is noun and other word is verb. They still have lack of vocabulary whether it is noun or verb and other part of speech in English.

Besides, both elements of grammar, simple present tense and plural noun have same concept of forming the sentence. The use of -s and -es forms in sentences, make some difficulties for students to differentiate each sentence that given to them. The students are difficult to use the formulating the suffix -s or -es between plural form and simple present tense.

While from the questionnaire, the finding showed that 65% students agree that in learning English, learning grammar is difficult based on their experience previously in junior and senior high school. The part of grammar which hard enough to master is tenses, more 80.7% students agree that tenses is difficult material for them. That is why it is difficult for them to differentiate the marker -s or -es for infinitive in simple present tense and in plural noun.

Based on the data findings above, it could be concluded that the students of Mathematic education study program IKIP PGRI Pontianak in academic year 2015/2016 have difficulties in using the marker -s or -es for infinitive in simple present tense and in plural noun. The result also supported by the students' questionnaire result wich most of them have difficulties in using -s or -es since the marker are used in both simple present verb and plural noun. The students still feel that grammar is the most difficult subject in English especialy tenses.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the analysis of the students' test, it is concluded that an analysis on the difficulties in the use of plural -s form and simple present tense marker -s to the first semester students of Mathematic education study program IKIP PGRI Pontianak in academic year 2015/2016 is classified into poor. They are difficult to differentiate the use of both markers -s because they are less of vocabulary, which word is noun or verb. Those forms of both grammatical elements influence the students to have clearly understanding of the English grammar.

From the finding above, the researcher suggest that, before come to the grammar material, it will be best if the lecturer explain about part of speech to the students. Give the students more exercise in part of speech in order to enrich the students with the vocabulary and understanding about different kinds of vocabulary. The lecturer can introduce the students with the exercise of plural form and simple present tense to avoid the misunderstanding about the infinitive and noun with marker -s.

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