

A Descriptive Study of The Students' Ability In Function Words At The Eight Grade Students of SMPN 24 Banjarmasin

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Abstract

Function words are the words that are used to make the sentences grammatically correct. Pronouns, determiners, conjunctions, prepositions, and auxiliary verbs are examples of function words. If the EFL students used the function words incorrectly, that they are probably considered as poor speakers of English. This research was aimed to describe the students' ability in using function words at eighth grade of SMP Negeri 24 Banjarmasin. This research used quantitative approaches with the descriptive method and case study design. The population of this study was the 216 students of the eighth grade students. The researcher took 30 students as the sample, because the researcher took a purposive sample as sampling technique for this research. The result of ability in using function words showed that there was no student get an excellent ability, 10 students (33, 3%) very good ability, 5 students (16, 7%) good ability, 8 students (26, 7%) average ability, and 7 students (23, 3%) low ability. It means the ability in using function words of the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 24 Banjarmasin was in an average ability. Based on the result above, it is suggested that the teacher should give more exercises because the results score was showed that students get an average ability and it is also suggested that students should increase their function words, grammar abilities.

Keywords: : *Function Words, Students, Ability*

A. Introduction

Language plays an important role in human life. One tries to acquire, learn and use language as a means of communication, and simultaneously as social symbol of humanity. By using language, someone could make statements, convey facts and knowledge, explain or report something, and keep social relations among the language users. These indicate that by means of language, people can express their ideas, feeling, and information through communication.

As one of languages in the world, English is considered and applied as an international language. Since then, it is very popular and has been spoken and learnt by almost all people in the world. Generally, all students learning English language want to be able to listen, to speak, to read, and to write English well.

Nevertheless, they sometimes find some difficulties in mastering all the aspects of English language. English is an instrument to develop science and technology, particularly to developing countries. It is good tool to make international relation. However, for someone who said that English is a foreign language, he will get difficulty in studying English, like Indonesian people. Therefore, we must work hard in order to master English well.

English consists of four language skills. There are listening, speaking, reading and writing. But, it is not an easy matter to master those skills. Learning language also has to master language elements, one of them is grammar. Grammar is one of the most important aspects that have to be mastered by the students, so they can be easy to communicate. When they are using those four language skills, the sentences that are spoken and written arranged according to grammatical pattern of the language.

Grammar is concerned with the form of stretch of languages and includes the study of syntactical and morphological system of that language (<http://thefreedictionary.com>, accessed on Tuesday, 12 April 2016). By mastering grammar, the learners will be able to create the sentence appropriately according to pattern. Moreover the sentences that are grammatical correct will be more meaningful and easier to be understood. So, grammar of language determines the meaning of sentence.

For students who learn English, they often get confused and mistakes when making English sentence. So in order to make as less as possible, it is important to learn all the rules that govern in English. The sentence is the basic unit of communication in language. A sentence is a group of words which expresses a complete thought. To make a good sentence. We should be able to put the words together based on the rules.

As the learner of English, we need to know about the word classes because the word classes determine the position or the function of the word itself in the sentence. It means that words are fundamentals units in every sentence. According to Paul Kroger (2005), classify words into two great classes, which are called content words and function words. Content words consist of Verb, Noun, Adjective, and Adverb. They are the building blocks that are used to form larger syntactical construction. Function words consist of auxiliary, determiners, preposition, conjunctions, and pronouns.

According to Lesley Jeffries (2006:93) Function words that have little lexical meaning or have ambiguous meaning, but instead serve to express grammatical relationships with other words within a sentence, or specify the attitude or mood of the speaker. They signal the structural relationships that words have to one another and are the glue that holds sentences together. Thus, they serve as important elements to the structures of sentences. The position of function words in sentence is very important because function words are words which are very instrumental in English grammar. If the function words are missing or used incorrectly, the listener would probably still get the main idea of what we are saying but as the foreign learner, we are probably considered poor speakers of English. Eight grade students of SMPN 24 Banjarmasin is chosen as

the subject for the research because they have learned about function words so the researcher interested to know about their ability in function words

B. Conceptual Framework of Study

Nature of Ability

Ability is the quality of being able to do something, it means that ability is natural or acquired skill or talent of someone (<http://thefreedictionary.com>, accessed on Tuesday, 12 April 2016).

Based on the statements above, it can conclude that ability is the power or knowledge how to do / use something. In this case, ability is the knowledge how to use function words (Determiners, prepositions, auxiliary verb, pronouns and conjunction) in English sentence.

Definition of Function Words

Function words are the words that use to make the sentences grammatically correct. Pronouns, determiners, conjunctions, prepositions, and auxiliary verbs are example of function words. If the function words are missing or used incorrectly, that show probably considered poor speakers of English, but the listener would probably still get the main idea of what the speaker saying. According to Lesley Jeffries (2006:92) grammatical words or function words, have a very important function in English it means that function words are the hallmark of human language.

Determiners

According to Michael Swan (1996:148), determiner divided into two groups: Group A and Group B. Group A is articles, possessives, and demonstrative. Then, group B is quantifiers, some group B determiners are used with singular nouns (each), plurals (many), uncountable (much), and some with more than one kind of noun (which). There are three main subclasses of determiner the articles, the demonstrative adjectives and the possessive adjectives.

Auxiliary Verbs

According to Lesley Jeffries (2006:100) Auxiliary verbs are support the lexical verbs by introducing some of the regular meanings that are needed by all verbs, such as tense. Auxiliaries were originally prototypical verbs which over the course of time have come to function like structure-class words. Because of their origins, they are often called auxiliary verbs.

The auxiliary verbs are made up of the modals (May, must, might and so on), have (perfective) and be (progressive and passive).

Prepositions

According to Michael Swan (1996:444) most English preposition have several different function and these may correspond to several different preposition in another language. At the same time , different preposition can have very similar uses (in the morning, on Monday) many nouns, verbs. And adjectives are normally used with particular prepositions. The preposition always introduces a phrase that consists of itself and a noun phrase, and the meaning of the whole phrase usually indicates some circumstance in which the action of the clause is occurring, or the context of a previous noun phrase.

Pronouns

According to Lesley Jeffries (2006:93) Pronouns, although a grammatical class, function syntactically in similar ways to the noun class because they can be subjects, objects and complements. This makes sense because their role is to substitute for more complex nouns and noun phrases in order to make the language more efficient and avoid repetition.

Conjunctions

According to Michael Swan (1996:129) conjunction are words that join clauses into sentences. Conjunction not only join clauses together, they also show how the meanings of the two clauses are related. Normally a conjunction connects two clauses into one sentence.

Approach and type of research

The researcher used descriptive research because the researcher want to describe an ability of students at SMPN 24 Banjarmasin in the eight grade. The analysing data that will be used in this research is quantitative method. According to Fraenkel et al. (2012:15), quantitative data deal primarily with numbers while qualitative data primarily involve words. Quantitative approach will be used to determine the students' ability in using function word. . In this research, collect data by using test. The test is conducted by asking the students to answer the test in using function word.

Population and Sample

Jack R. Fraenkel and Norman E. Wallen (2006:93) define population as the group of interest to the researcher the group to whom the researcher would like to generalize the result of the study. The population of this research is the students of eight grade of SMPN 24 BANJARMASIN academic year 2016/2017. There are seventh classes of eight grade and the total students are 217 students.

Sample is a part or representation of population that will be tested. According to Jack R Fraenkel and Norman E. Wallen, (2006:92) "sample is the group on which information is obtained". The sample of this research is eight grade students of SMPN 24 Banjarmasin. The researcher takes VIII C class which consists of 30 students as the sample.

The researcher used purposive sampling to obtain the sample. The purposive sampling is when the researcher assume they can use their knowledge of the population to judge whether or not a particular sample have already been determined and know based on the characteristics of the population as long as the sample can represent of all population.

The instrument of the research

The instrumentation of this research was an achievement test. Achievement test is defined as a measure of an individual knowledge or performance in a given area or subject. Fraenkel et al. (2012:129) claim that achievement test was mostly used in schools to measure learning or the effectiveness of instruction. In this study, the achievement test was used to measure the students' achievement in using function word.

The test is multiple-choice test where the students were asked to answer 50 multiple-choice questions which contains Determiners, preposition, auxiliary verb, pronouns, and conjunctions.

C. METHOD

Method of data collection is the way that is used to collect the data. There are some data that need to be fulfilled in this research. In this research, the achievement test was used to measure students' ability in using function words. According to Brown (2000), test is a method of measuring a person's ability or knowledge in a given domain.

On this research, the researcher gives an objective test is multiple choice for the students to collect the data. the researcher give 50 questions about function word, which focused on determiners, prepositions, auxiliary verb, pronouns, and conjunction.

Reliability of the test

The researcher do the research in class eighth SMP Negeri 24 Banjarmasin. In this study, the test is done twice; it is intended to gain the reliability of the test. Therefore, the method of achieving the reliability is test and re-tests. The result of the first test is compared with the result of the second test. Then it is calculated by using Pearson's Product Moment Coefficient Formula as follow:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{N \sum XY - (\sum X) \cdot (\sum Y)}{\sqrt{\{N \cdot \sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2\} \{N \cdot \sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2\}}}$$

Validity of Instruments

According to Fraenkel (2012:148) a test can be said to be valid if it measures what is supposed to measure. The test must aim to provide a true

measure of particular skill, which is intended to measure. Suharsimi Arikunto (2002:146) stated that if the R_{xy} is more than r table of product moment, the test could be said valid. From the calculation of R_{xy} it found that R_{xy} is 0,997 and r table is 0,361, so the test is valid.

Data Analysis

There are five kinds procedurs of analyzing data: Editing, Calculating data, Classified data, finding mean score, and interpretation data to classify an ability

D. RESEARCH RESULTS

The researcher used test re-test method, so the researcher done twice for the test. The first test was conducted on August 11th 2016 for students in VIII C. The second test was conducted on August 18th 2016. The test could be said reliable if R_{xy} is more than equalled to the r table with 95% significance level. Based on the results, it was showed that R_{xy} 0,997 is more than 0,361 r table product moment.

Most of the students still had difficulties in the use of conjunctions in the sentences. It was prove by the mean score of conjunctions which was the lowest grade among others. The researcher thought that the students cannot connects two clauses into one sentence and they don't understand how to connect it and how to make a conjunction show the meanings of two clauses are related.

Based on the analysis results, it was found that the good ability among the functions word is auxiliary verb. It means this ability is the best among others. For auxiliary verbs (be, do and have) they don't have problem, it just only eight students got wrong answers. But, for modal auxiliary verbs (will, shall, can, could, may) most of students got wrong.

Based on the total score students' ability in using function words, there were 7 students who got score less than 65 and included in low classification, there were 8 students included in average classification, there were 5 students included in good classification, and there were 10 students were included in very good classification. The students ability in using function words scores is 75,3. It means that in general the functions word ability of the eight grade students of SMPN 24 Banjarmasin.

E. CONCLUSION

There were 30 students who were involved in this research and did the test. Based on the data analysis, it is obtained that the average ability of the eight grade at SMPN 24 Banjarmasin in using function words is classified into

an average ability. Based on the research findings in previous chapter, the researcher get three conclusion that are:

1. The eighth grade of students at SMPN 24 Banjarmasin are still made many errors, it was shown by the low score ability. 33,3% students had the low ability in using determiner, 13,3% students had the low ability in using preposition, 23,3% students had the low ability in using auxiliary verb, 40% students had the low ability in using pronoun, and 40% students had the low ability in using conjunction.
2. The students had the lack percentage in using conjunction. It was shown from the average percentage of total correct answer in using conjunction is 70%, for determiner is 73,7%, for preposition is 77,7%, for pronoun is 75,3%, and auxiliary verb has the higher percentage than others, that is 79,7%.
3. The level ability in using function words at the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 24 Banjarmasin was an average. It showed that there was no student got an excellent ability, 10 students (33, 3%) got very good ability, 5 students (16, 7%) got good ability, 8 students (26, 7%) got average ability, and 7 students (23, 3%) got low ability. It means the ability in using function words level of the students of the eighth grade of SMP Negeri 24 Banjarmasin was in an average ability.

Suggestions

Based on the conclusions above, the researcher would like to suggest as follow:

1. To the students

The students at the eighth grade of SMP Negeri 24 Banjarmasin should be aware of their grammar activity such as: Reading grammar books and doing grammar activity that given by teacher

2. To the English Teacher

The English teacher at SMP Negeri 24 Banjarmasin needs to improve the way of teaching grammar to improve the students' ability in using function word or others grammars level into a very good or even an excellent level.

3. To other researchers

It is suggested to the other researchers in using function words ability to add more various instruments (function words test). The researcher also expected that this research can be used as references for the next researchers who are interested in the same field.

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