

Evaluating the Quality of Sentence Structures, Citations and References in Journal Articles: A Case Study in the Faculty of Mathematics and Science and the Faculty of Engineering

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative descriptive study attempts to evaluate the sentence types, the sentence logic, and the appropriateness of citations and references in the journal articles written by lecturers from the Faculty of Mathematics and Science and the Faculty of Engineering. The sentence analysis is based on the frameworks proposed by Alwi, Dardjowidjojo, Lapoliwa, and Moeliono (2003) and Oshima and Hogue (2007). Meanwhile, the analysis of citations and references is based on APA style (6th edition). The results of the sentence analysis show that complex sentences are the most frequent sentence type found in the journal articles. Moreover, the quality of sentence logic in the journal articles is good since most of sentences are written correctly and well structured. Citations and references analysis regarding the characteristics of reference sources show several important results: 1) books are the most frequent reference sources used in the journal articles, 2) the most common language used in the journal articles is Indonesian language, and 3) the sources published in 6 – 10 years are the most frequent source used in the journal articles. Regarding the appropriateness of citations and references, citations and references are mostly written inappropriately. In addition, mistakes related to the use of mechanics are the most common citation mistake and mistakes related to title are the most common reference mistake found in the journal articles. Overall, it can be concluded that the journal articles are good regarding the sentence logic but they need more improvement regarding citations and references.

Keywords: *Sentence Types, Sentence Logic, Appropriateness, Citations, References*

INTRODUCTION

Writing in academic setting like university is often regarded as a challenging task. This is because academic writing has different purposes and different characteristics from any writing like journalistic and creative writing. Bruce (2008, p. 1) states that general purpose of academic writing is “to develop the ability to integrate a wide range of different types of knowledge”. Specifically, academic writing aims to persuade readers to believe in what they write (Richards, 2008). Those purposes are related to writing for others. Murray (2005) emphasizes on the importance of writing for others through journal articles. Journal article, as a form of academic writing, is often viewed as a rapid medium of integrating information since it is commonly accessed freely via university library as stated in Thyer (2008). This view often motivates academicians, especially lecturers, to publish their journal articles. Lecturers mostly publish journal articles for disseminating the results of research to other scholars (Thyer, 2008).

Academic writing, in this case journal articles, is viewed as a difficult challenge for academicians since it has several characteristics in order to create good academic works. The characteristics are formality, detachment, tentativeness, objectivity, rigor, and clarity (Monippally & Pawar, 2010). Those characteristics are sometimes ignored by some academicians. The ignorance is caused by the lack of education on the characteristics of academic writing that is sustained by some academicians (Murray, 2005).

In academic writing, there are also several problems. Dunleavy (2003) describes some problems in academic writing such as the problem in constructing the sentence structure and the use of citation and reference style. Oshima and Hogue (2007) illustrate that the common sentence problems are sentence fragments, parallelism, and run-on sentences. The problems of citation and reference style occur when making citations and references (e.g. spelling inconsistencies, citing multiple authors, incorrect formatting, capitalization, etc.) (Onwuegbuzie,

Combs, Slate, & Frels, 2010). Moreover, sentence structure problems can be assumed as unsuccessful attempts to present ideas or contents through sentences. Meanwhile, the problems in citation and reference style can be assumed as a writers' problem in acknowledging other works.

Several researchers have conducted some studies related to problems in academic writing. Jalal (2012) did an analysis of academic writing problems in students' research papers related to sentence problems. The results of his study showed that the problems were such as coherence, sentence structure and sentence logic. Regarding the problem of citation and reference style, Suwarjo, et al (2012) analysed the use of citation and reference on students' research paper of Education Faculty. The results of their analysis showed that some mistakes were found such as quoting sources without citations in the body of research and without references in the reference lists.

All of those previous studies above took students as the subject of

the study. However, this present study is different from those previous studies since it attempts to take lecturers' works as the object of the research while the previous studies took students as the object of research. The journal articles were from the same university, a university in Bandung, West Java that focuses on the Faculty of Mathematics and the Faculty of Engineering. This study aims to evaluate the quality of sentence structures and the quality of citations and references on journal articles made by lecturers from science and engineering discipline. Furthermore, this present study aims to reveal the tendency of the way lecturers create sentence structures, citations, and references in journal articles.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Academic Writing: Journal Articles

Academic writing is frequently viewed as a difficult genre of writing. It can be seen from definitions: 1) it is a set of conventions that should be followed by academicians and 2) it is a tool for integrating knowledge to

readers (Murray, 2005; Monippally & Pawar, 2010). Academic writing also has general purposes such as disseminating research information and persuading readers to believe in their research information (Richards & Miller, 2008; Thyer, 2008). In addition, more specific purposes of academic writing can be seen from one of academic writing forms in this case journal articles. Journal articles are usually published by academicians specifically lecturers for developing career and gaining recognition for their works (Murray, 2005).

There are some important characteristics of academic writing such as audience, purpose, organization, style, flow, and presentation that should be considered and understood by academicians in order to write good academic writing (Swales & Feak, 2004). After considering those characteristics, academicians as writers should also understand the structure of academic writing, specifically journal articles. As academic writing, journal articles typically have a standard structure to

facilitate communication, which is called as IMRAD (Hall, 2003; Swales & Feak, 2004). IMRAD is abbreviation for Introduction, Method, Result and Discussion. However, there are three other important sections namely titles, abstracts, and conclusions that accompany IMRAD as a standard structure (Hall, 2003).

Sentence Types and Sentence Problems

Sentences are defined as a group of words that aims to express a complete thought that contains at least one subject and one verb (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). Many experts in academic writing categorize sentences into several types. Alwi et al. (2003) show that sentences include three sentence types namely simple sentences, compound sentences and complex sentences. Meanwhile, Oshima and Hogue (2007) divide sentences into four types namely simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences and compound-complex sentences. There is a difference between Alwi et al.'s

(2003) view and Oshima and Hogue's (2007) view regarding simple sentences. The description of the difference of simple sentences' view and other sentence types is shown in the parts below.

Simple sentences consist of subjects and verbs that can be combined with other elements such as objects, complements, and adverbs but those elements are optional (Alwi et al., 2003; Oshima & Hogue, 2007). However, Alwi et al.'s (2003) view show that simple sentences only have one subject-verb pair (Subject-Verb) while Oshima and Hogue's (2007) view show that simple sentences have other patterns namely Subject-Verb-Verb and Subject-Subject-Verb-Verb. For instance, a sentence of Subject-Verb-Verb pattern is Transformers film entertained and thrilled audiences everywhere; this sentence is categorized into a compound sentence if it is seen from Alwi et al.'s (2003) view.

Compound sentences are composed of at least two simple sentences or two independent clauses that are joined by coordinators (e.g.

and, but, so, and or) (Oshima & Hogue, 2007).

Complex sentences are a sentence type that combines one of independent clause and one or more dependent clause(s) that are connected by subordinators (after, because, that etc.) (Oshima & Hogue, 2007).

Compound-complex sentences are a sentence type that has at least three clauses that consist of any combination of dependent and independent clauses. This sentence type is connected by coordinators and subordinators. In addition, there are rules for using commas in the complex sentences: 1) the use of comma for separating clauses when a dependent clause comes first and 2) the use of comma that when an independent clause comes first.

Sentences can be categorized into logical sentences or illogical sentences. There are four sentence problems such as syntactical problems, parallelism, conjunctions, and punctuations (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). Syntactical problems are related to incomplete sentences or sentence fragments (Oshima &

Hogue, 2007). An incomplete sentence is when a sentence does not have a subject or a verb or does not express a complete thought (an incomplete thought). An incomplete thought is when a sentence only has a dependent clause without an independent clause. Problems in parallelism are related to listing, comparing or contrasting items of clauses in sentences (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). It occurs when the grammatical patterns of each clause do not have the same patterns or do not have the same parts of speech (e.g. noun, verb, prepositional phrase). Problems related to the use of conjunctions occur when words, phrases, clauses or sentences are joined incorrectly. There are two types of conjunctions namely coordinators (e.g. and, but, so, or) and subordinating and subordinators (e.g. although, because, when, while) (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). Two problems of punctuations are highlighted as follows: 1) a sentence is not ended by a full stop (.) or no punctuation mark in the end of sentence; and 2) sentences are joined incorrectly.

Citations and References

Citing is an action of giving credit for other researchers when an author borrows other researchers' ideas. Specifically, a citation is an in-text marker of sources (Weber-Wulff, 2014). In addition, a citation is a part that gives minimal information of the sources in the body of a document (e.g. names of authors, years and pages) (Monippally & Pawar, 2010). There are three ways of citing sources such as paraphrasing, summarizing, and direct quotation or quoting (Krause, 2007; RMIT University, 2012). References should be put at the end of the body document. This aims to give more detail information of the sources for the readers (Fuwiler, 2002). The detail information of references is such as an author(s), a year of publication, a title, a place of publication and a publisher (Weber-Wulff, 2014). References can be put correctly by elaborating reference and citation (UCOL Student Experience Team, 2011). Authors should put citations in the body of document and

then write the references in the reference lists.

There are various citation and reference styles. There are some examples of citation and reference styles such as APA (American Psychological Association), MLA (Modern Language Association), Harvard, and IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers). The differences among styles are not about the substance but on the punctuation (Monippally & Pawar, 2010).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method. This method was chosen since the data were the collection of journal articles. Creswell (2009, p.4) explains that “a qualitative method is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups ascribed to a social or human problem”. In this study, a qualitative method attempts to explore and understand the quality of journal articles that depends on how the authors write their journal articles. In addition, Hancock, Ockleford, and Windridge (2009)

state that a qualitative method emphasizes on description and interpretation that leads to an evaluation for a process. Specifically, this study focuses on the description and the interpretation of some elements of journal articles such as sentence structures (including sentence types and sentence logic), citations and references (including types of reference sources and appropriateness of citations and references).

The design of qualitative research in this study was a case study. Case study aims to investigate a certain phenomenon in its own context (Yin, 2009). In this study, case study was employed to investigate the use of sentence structure, citations and references in the journal articles written by lecturers of the Faculty of Mathematics and Science and the Faculty of Engineering.

This present study was also supported by simple descriptive statistics in order to simplify the process of interpreting the data. Schreiber (2008, p.1) believes that descriptive statistics can be combined with qualitative design because “it

constitutes a mathematical summarization of the data where a large number of observed values are mathematically converted to a few numbers". In this case, the large number of sentences, citations, and references were converted into percentages.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the analysis related to sentence types in the journal articles, the lecturers in the Faculty Mathematics and Science and in the Faculty of Engineering mostly use complex sentences in their journal articles. The overall results of the analysis of sentence types in both faculties show that the percentage of complex sentences is 67.2%. In addition, the percentage of simple sentences as the second most frequent sentence type is 21.5%. Meanwhile, compound sentences is the third most frequent sentence type with the percentage of 6.5% and compound-complex sentences is the fourth most frequent sentence types with the percentage of 4.8%. The examples of the four sentence types are as follows.

Complex Sentence:

Hasil analisis sidik ragam menunjukkan bahwa ada interaksi antara cara modifikasi pati dengan tingkat substitusi pati. (The result of the analysis of variance showed that there was an interaction between the ways of starch modification with the degree of substitution of starch).

Simple Sentence:

Sains adalah sebuah produk dan proses. (Science is a product and a process).

Compound sentence:

Kandungan inulin pada pati gembili pre gelatinisasi sebesar 12,65% sedangkan inulin pada pati gembili autoclaving-cooling sebesar 11,59%. (The content of inulin in the pre-gelatinized yam starch is 12,65% while inulin in autoclaving-cooling yam starch is 11,59%).

Compound-complex sentence:

PTK berbasis penelitian sedangkan lesson study tidak selalu berbasis penelitian yang mempunyai cakupan lebih luas daripada PTK. (PTK is based on research while lesson study is not always based on research which has wider scope than PTK).

Based on the results of the analysis related to sentence types in the journal articles, the lecturers in the Faculty Mathematics and Science and in the Faculty of Engineering mostly use complex sentences in their journal articles. It indicates that the language used in all journal articles is denser. This is in line with Buckingham (2015) who describes that if the journal articles have more terminologies, long noun phrases, and quite complex, so that the language used in journal articles becomes denser. In addition, the use of complex sentence also indicates that the lecturers in both faculties follow academic writing style that usually tends to use longer and complex sentences (Monippally & Pawar, 2010). Meanwhile, the occurrence of other sentence types, which are simple sentences, compound sentences, and compound - complex sentences, indicates that the use of sentences found in the journal articles from the two facilities is varied. In academic writing, varied sentence types are suggested by Walden University (2015) to maintain the flow of ideas, intensify points, and

sustain the interest of the readers. The results of this present study are similar to Viriani's (2013) study and Ernawati's (2014) study that found four sentence types namely simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences, and compound-complex sentences in students' academic writing.

Regarding sentence logic, the overall results of sentence logic show that the frequency and the percentage of logical sentences (1033 times or 86%) are significantly higher than illogical sentences (171 times or 14%). It indicates that lecturers of both faculties mostly present information and ideas logically because they can combine correctly the element of sentences (subjects, verbs, objects, complements, and adverbials) and conjunctions (subordinators and coordinators). In addition, they use parallel structures in writing sentences that have several advantages such as expressing ideas in equal weight and emphasizing important information or ideas (Fowler & Aaron, 2015).

The analysis of sentence problems shows that the most

frequent sentence problem is related to the use of conjunctions that appeared 79 times or 41%. The second most frequent sentence problem is the use of punctuations with the percentage of 28%. The third most frequent sentence problem is related to syntactical problems with the percentage of 21%. The fourth most frequent sentence problem is related to parallelism problems with the percentage of 10%. The examples of sentence problems are as follows.

Conjunctions:

Earn value merupakan peringatan dini bagi suatu pengelolaan proyek konstruksi sehingga permasalahan yang terjadi pada proyek dapat diidentifikasi agar supaya (double subordinators) sasaran proyek konstruksi yang telah ditetapkan dapat tercapai. (Earn value is an early warning for a construction project management, so that the problems occurred in the project can be identified in order to so that (double subordinators) the target of the construction, which has been decided, can be achieved).

Punctuations:

[Secara visual, perbandingan tiap ciri kemampuan berpikir kreatif siswa dalam pembelajaran PTD tersebut dapat dilihat pada Gambar 2 [without a full stop]. (Visually, the comparison of each characteristic of students' creative thinking ability in the PTD learning can be seen in the Figure 2 [without a full stop]).

Syntactical Problems:

[Without an independent clause] Maka dihasilkan angka – angka berikut ini. ([Without an independent clause] So that is resulted numbers as follows).

Parallelism:

PTK dan lesson study ditinjau dari aspek: definisi, tujuan, tahapan, siapa pelaku kegiatan, dan cakupan (unparalleled noun phrases) . (PTK and lesson study are observed from the aspects: definitions, purposes, steps, who the actors of the activity are, and scopes (unparalleled noun phrases)).

Those results indicate that the lecturers of both faculties tend to use conjunctions inappropriately. The results of this present study are also similar to the results of research conducted by Darmini, Wahyuni,

Saptomo, and Suparmin (2012). The results of their study showed that the use of incorrect conjunctions was frequently found in the sentences made by students of Veteran Bangun Nusantara Sukoharjo University in their research papers.

The quality of citations and references are discussed regarding characteristics of reference sources such as types of reference sources, the language used in citations and references, and the currency of citations and references.

The results of the types of reference sources' analysis show that some sources are found in both faculties such as book, article/journal, book chapter, paper/thesis/dissertation, web page/blog, newspaper/magazine, dictionary and 'others'. The frequency of reference sources based on the overall results show that books become the most frequent source reference (77 times or 54%) among other source references. In addition, the second most frequent source type is articles/journals and the third most frequent source type is web page/blog. The percentage of the two

sources differ 1% only (14% and 13%). The fourth most frequent reference source is paper/thesis/dissertation and 'others' that appear 12 times or 8%. The fifth most frequent reference sources are newspaper/ magazine, book chapter, and dictionary. The percentage of those categories is only 1%. Those results indicate that lecturers in both faculties tend to use books as the main reference source for their journal articles because books contain in-depth theories, comprehensive accounts of research, and overviews that are often used to support research (CQ University Australia, 2014). In addition, it is more accessible since it can be borrowed from university library or it can be purchased from bookshops or it can be purchased via online.

Regarding the language of reference sources, Indonesian language reference sources (66%) are frequently used than foreign language reference sources (34%) in the journal articles. It indicates that Indonesian reference sources can be accessed more easily than those in foreign reference sources. In addition,

Indonesian reference sources can be understood in a short time than foreign reference sources since they must not be translated as foreign reference sources. The results in this present study are similar to the results of Wardani's (2009) study that showed Indonesian language was the most frequent language used by the students in their research papers.

Regarding the currency of citations and references, the overall results show that sources published in 6 - 10 years are the most frequent source used in the journal articles (36.3%). The second most frequent source is sources published in ≤ 5 years (26%). The sources published in ≥ 21 years are the third most frequent source (16.1%) and the sources published in 11 - 15 years are the fourth most frequent source (13.3%). The fifth most frequent source is sources published in 16 - 20 years (7%). The last category of the currency reference sources is 'unknown' that is a category for reference sources without year of publication as the least frequent reference source (1.3%). Those results indicate that the sources used

by the lecturers in the Faculty of Mathematics and Science and in the Faculty of Engineering are up-to-date sources. It can be said that the majority of the sources found in the journal articles present current information. This is in line with Berkeley Library University of California's (2014) view. The view is related to information in reference sources that should be not out-of-date and undated. The results regarding currency of reference sources are similar to a study conducted by Chintawidy (2014) that investigated the currency of sources used by students in their research papers in Faculty of Social Sciences Education and Faculty of Language and Arts Education.

The quality of citations and references are also discussed regarding the appropriateness of citations and references. The results show that correct citations and incorrect citations have the same percentage, which is 50% or 63 times. The percentage of correct references is 0% and percentage of the incorrect references is 100%. In addition, the percentage of blank citations is higher

(35%) than the percentage of blank references (14%). Those results indicate that the quality of citations and references is not good since the citations and the references are mostly written incorrectly. In addition, the occurrence of blank citations and references indicates that there are some discrepancy between citations and references. Furthermore, there are some mistake categories of citations and references.

Regarding citation mistakes, the use of mechanics is the most frequent citation mistake with the percentage of 72%. In addition, the second most frequent citation mistake is related to the way authors' names written, the third most frequent citation mistake is related to the use of secondary sources, and the fourth most frequent citation mistake is related to the use of year of publication. The percentage of the three categories is under 18%, which quite low compared to mistakes in mechanics category. The last category 'others' is the category for other mistakes found except the four categories (mechanics, authors' names, secondary sources, and year of

publication). This category is not found in the journal articles. Four examples of citation mistake categories are shown below.

1) Mechanics: Cheesman (2006: 48) (Incorrect colon (:)) and without 'hlm.' (halaman) or 'p.' (page)

2) Authors' name: (Mukhammad Ali, 1987:179) (Full name of the authors' name)

3) Secondary source: Guilford (Munandar, 2009) (Without the word dalam or 'as cited in')

4) Year of publication: Munandar [without year publication] (Without a year of publication)

The results regarding citation mistakes indicate that the use of incorrect punctuations (commas and full stops) and the use of the word dan (and) and & ampersands (&) inconsistently. This is in line with Onwuegbuzie, Combs, Slate, and Rebbeca (2010) who showed the incorrect use of the word and and ampersands (&) in citations as the common mistake in citations.

Writing titles becomes the most frequent reference mistake found in the journal articles since the

percentage is 40% or 139 times out of 348 total sources. The percentage of other reference mistakes is under 20%. The percentage of mistakes in the use of authors' names as the second most frequent reference mistake is 18% that differs 1% only to the percentage of 'others' (17%) as the third most frequent reference. Similarly, the percentage of mistakes regarding year of publication differs 1% only (14% and 13%). The examples of mechanics mistakes are presented below.

1) Title: Standar Nasional Akustik Bangunan Sekolah (Capitalized and non-italicized letters)

2) Authors' name: Chandra, Didi Teguh, (Full name of the author)

3) Year of publication: 2000, (Without a parenthesis '(') and a full stop (.)

4) Publisher: Bandung. ITB, (Incorrect commas (,))

5) 'Others': Widyaningsih, D.S. (2012). Penerapan Pembelajaran Sistem Sirkulasi Berbasis Praktikum Virtual untuk Meningkatkan Kemampuan

Berpikir Kritis dan Sikap Ilmiah Siswa SMP. Tesis Program Pasca Sarjana Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia: tidak diterbitkan. (Wrong format)

Those results indicate that titles are made inconsistently in capitalized letters or in non-italicized letters. The results of this present study are also similar to the results found by Harinarayana, Chikkamanju, and Raju (2011) in their study. Their study examined the accuracy of references that showed mistakes in titles as one of the major mistakes found in the psychology theses among other major reference mistakes such as authors' name mistakes, page number mistakes, and year of publication mistakes.

The citation and reference mistakes commonly occur when citations and references lack of some elements of citations or references or when use incorrect elements of citations and references. Moreover, those results indicate that there is a violation of APA style in Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th edition).

CONCLUSION

Overall, it can be concluded that the occurrence of complex sentences as the most frequent sentence type indicates that the lecturers in both faculties follow academic writing style that usually tends to use longer and complex sentences (Monippally & Pawar, 2010). The quality of sentence logic in the journal articles is good since most of sentences are written correctly and well structured. However, the occurrence of some illogical sentences reflects weaknesses of writing academically. Regarding the quality of citations and references based on the currency of reference sources and types of reference sources, most of reference sources are up-to-date sources but they do not usually contain information of current issues since books are the main reference sources (CQ University Australia, 2014). In addition, Indonesian language as the most frequent language used in reference sources indicates that most of sources do not write by foreign researchers. It is normal since the context of the study is in Indonesia.

Based on the reference sources' characteristics, it can be said that reference sources used in the journal articles in both faculties have not fulfilled yet one of the requirements of good research regarding the primary sources because the science and engineering discipline usually use journal articles, conference proceedings, technical reports, and lab notebooks as the primary sources while books are the secondary sources (Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2015). Regarding the appropriateness of citations and references, the quality of citations and references is inadequate since most of citations and references are written inappropriately. It indicates that the way of citing and referencing does not follow APA style in Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th edition) in 2010. In addition, the occurrence of blank citations and blank references indicates that there are some discrepancy between citations and references that lead to an issue of plagiarism. This is in line with Weber-Wulff's (2014) theory that identified unlisted citations or

unlisted references as common types of plagiarism named as pawn sacrifice. In other words, academic writing is indeed complicated which requires careful attention to the following elements: sentence types, sentence logic and citing and referencing.

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