STUDENTS’ STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME GRAMMATICAL DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING

THESIS
Submitted in partial fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree of
Sarjana Pendidikan

KCHARISMA PUTRI NATASYA
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ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAM
FACULTY OF LANGUAGE AND ARTS
UNIVERSITAS KRISTEN SATYA WACANA
SALATIGA
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STUDENTS’ STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME GRAMMATICAL DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING

Kharisma Putri Natasya

ABSTRACT

This study attempted to identify the kind of grammatical difficulties faced by students and some the students’ strategies in making a paper in Academic Writing class. Descriptive qualitative study was used and the subject of this study was the English Education students in Faculty of Language and Arts in Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana. The participants have passed Academic Writing class. The sampling process was administered by applying a quota sampling technique. The data was collected by interviewing ten students have passed Academic Writing class. The results of this research showed that in making an academic paper the students faced grammatical difficulties in making grammatical sentences, making the passive sentences, and choosing the correct tense. Students also shared their strategies to overcome their difficulties including asking their friends, asking a lecturer, reading other journals and researching on the internet.

Key words : grammar, writing, academic writing, writing difficulties, students’ strategies

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one important skill which has to be mastered by students because it can help them to think critically and deeply. By learning writing, the students can understand and know how to express their ideas, how to write effectively, how to share their thoughts with someone else through writing. Then, writing grammatically is important. In academic writing, where the students are expected to demonstrate their understanding of very complex ideas, it is absolutely essential to express their ideas in grammatical sentences. Academic
writing is very challenging for students in EFL. According to Morgan (2012), academic writing is a style of writing: just as if you write a short story or a newspaper article, there are rules to follow. Also, Al Fadda (2012) indicated that one of the basics of academic writing is the ability of the learners to access the relevant references and evaluate them in order to put the different ideas and opinions together so that they can develop their own voice. Therefore, as a writer a student should have the ability to exploit others’ ideas and write them in his/her own words and then index from where those ideas have been taken (Dehkordi & Allami, 2012). Furthermore, in order to have a free-error piece of writing, learners should carefully consider how to form a thesis statement, to write convincing supporting sentences, and finally edit them (Alsamdani, 2010). Therefore, Al Fadda (2012) pointed out that learners have to be familiar with punctuation marks such as the period, comma, semicolon, colon, dash, hyphen, and capitalization.

In writing an academic paper, students may face many possible difficulties. Some students might find difficulties in using formal language, making the references, finding supporting evidence to defend their argument, and making grammatical sentences. Based on my experience, when students made an academic paper, they tend to be confused of how to compose grammatically correct sentences. They might know what to write, but they do not know how to write it properly.

In response to the above issue, this study will be conducted to investigate students’ strategies to overcome their grammatical difficulties in writing academic papers. This study aims to answer the research question: “What do the students do
to overcome the grammatical difficulties in writing?” The result of this research is expected to help teachers to find the right strategies for students in facing the grammatical difficulties in writing, so that students could share and write their ideas more easily.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Emmaryana (2010) emphasizes that in the process of learning English, writing ability is the most difficult and complicated language skill to be learned almost by the students in every level of education. In addition to that, another author says that for the most part, within the classroom, any mention of grammar causes the student moments of discomfort and sometimes even terror (Al-Mekhlafi, 2011). In this section, it defines about writing and academic writing. Then, two last points explain about grammar in academic writing and learning strategies.

**Writing**

Language learning is a conscious process, is the product of either formal learning situation or a self-study programme (Kramina, 2000, p.27). Hence, language learning is an integral part of the unity of all language (Robbins, 2007, p. 49). It is plausible to claim that failure to master the verb forms of the target language makes errors inevitable in the process of learning a foreign language (Liu, 2012). Many of the studies conducted on Arab EFL learners’ writings reveal that English temporal system is one of the difficult grammatical areas for EFL learners to master (Farrokh, 2011). Likewise in Indonesia, many EFL students
have difficulties in learning English, especially when writing. In my observation, the students faced some difficulties in writing.

Nunan (2003, p.88) states that writing is an intellectual activity of finding the ideas and thinking about the way to express and arrange them into a statement and paragraph that is clear to be understood by other people. Also, writing is a skill and like most other skills, such as typing, driving and cooking, it can be learned (Langan, 2012, p.9). According to White and Arnt (1991) in Hammad (2013, p.1), writing is a thinking process which requires various efforts and involves several aspects and uses language to express the right meaning.

**Academic Writing**

According to Hartley (2008), academic writing refers to a style of expression that researchers use to define the intellectual boundaries of their disciplines and their specific areas of expertise. He also said that characteristics of academic writing include a formal tone, use of the third-person rather than first-person perspective, a clear focus on the research problem under investigation, and precise word choice.

An academic paper begins with a thesis. The writer of the academic paper aims to persuade readers of an idea or solution to a problem based on ‘evidence’, not personal opinion.

**Grammar in Academic Writing**

In writing, grammar is important. Saaristo (2015) defined grammar is a key concept in general linguistic theory, but a more thorough discussion of how
the concept of grammar has been, and can be, understood is beyond the scope of this article. In academic writing, he said that the students should be able to write grammatically and combine the words into good sentences. It means that they must choose the appropriate words that will be used to express their ideas or in making an academic essay. Therefore, the students need a lot of vocabulary, correct grammar and good comprehension in making good writing.

Writing grammatically is not easy. Students may face some problems in writing. In organizing ideas, Nation (2009, p. 119) states that some learners are able to say what they want to write but have difficulty in putting it into written form because of the students get difficulties in developing idea and sometimes they do not know what they will write. Then, he also states that lack of vocabulary may cause students to find it difficult to express their ideas, so that students choose incorrect words to make sentences, even write uncommunicative sentences.

Many scholars stated that grammar instruction is important if they want to reach their educational and professional goals (Shaw & Liu, 1998). Celce-Murcia (1991), for instance, emphasized the importance of a reasonable degree of grammatical accuracy in academic writing.

Emmaryana (2010) emphasizes that in the process of learning English, writing ability is the most difficult and complicated language skill to be learned almost by the students in every level of education. In addition to that, Al-Mekhlafi (2011) says that for the most part, within the classroom, any mention of grammar causes the student moments of discomfort and sometimes even terror. Hence,
writing ability as the capacity to produce ‘contextually’ (Hyland, 2002, p.6) correct forms of language, following prescribed patterns at either sentence or discourse level. Other studies, Duques (1989, p.310) said that writing is a linguistic activity, and grammaticals errors in writing have become a common problem. Other studies, Langan (2012, p.9) stated that “writing is a skill, and like most other skills, such as typing, driving, or cooking, it can be learned.” In conclusion, everyone can learn writing with more practice and it can be mastered by hard work.

**Learning Strategies**

Swann (2008, p.262) stated that “learning a foreign language is difficult, complicated, and time consuming”. Therefore, learning strategies are needed. Schumaker and Deshler (2006) defined a learning strategy as “an individual’s approach to a task. It includes how a person thinks and acts when planning, executing, and evaluating performance on a task and its outcomes.” Moreover, learning strategies are also defined as “specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques, such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task -- used by students to enhance their own learning” (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992, p.63). Respond to the above opinion, the students should use appropriate strategies depending on the task. They need to know which strategies they could use properly to reach their learning goal.
In the English education, due to individual differences, some learners acquire a new language more quickly and effectively, while others may struggle and make slow progress (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003). One of the factors attributing to individual differences is the learning strategies (Ellis, 2004) which, according to Oxford (1990, p.8), refer to specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations. Reder and Strawn (2001) stated that teachers are encouraged to choose learning strategies suitable for students and teach them how to understand learning strategies. Murray (2004) also maintained that teachers needed to use the most appropriate methods, procedures, and activities to promote learner autonomy by “modeling for students strategies which they can use in self-directed learning” (p.6). In this case, the teacher’s role only directs the students in choosing the right strategies. Various factors have been found to influence learners’ choice of language learning strategies. Ellis (2008) claimed that factors influencing learners’ choice of learning strategies include learner factors and social and situational factors. Hence, the students should be smart in choosing the right learning strategies for them.

Review of Previous Studies

A study by Al-Mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011) about “Difficulties in Teaching and Learning Grammar in an EFL Context”. The study reported aims to investigate the difficulties of a cross section of school EFL teachers in Oman as well as their perceptions of their students' difficulties with regard to grammar
The study was mainly quantitative in design, using a questionnaire and the subjects responded to each statement on a five-point Likert-type attitude scale (from 5 for 'strongly agree' to 1 for 'strongly disagree'). The respondents also provided background information on gender, qualification, teaching experience and the level they teach, for creating their profile in terms of variables. The data was analyzed (t-test and ANOVA) using the SPSS. The results of the studies were both teachers and students always face serious difficulties with regard to EFL grammar instruction, students facing them to a greater extent than teachers. It is obvious that EFL teachers consider these difficulties quite serious, which suggests that serious attention needs to be paid to them.

Sani (2011) investigates about “Senior High School Students’ Perceptions towards Grammar”. The research was conducted in Senior High School at SMA Kristen Satya Wacana Salatiga. The participants of this study were 45 students of grade X at SMA Kristen Satya Wacana Salatiga. The participants were around 16-17 years old with English as their foreign language. The participants were chosen by “criterion based” selection. This study used a questionnaire to collect the data in order to find out students’ perception towards Grammar. The type of questionnaire was an integration of closed-ended questionnaire. The results of the studies were more than 50% of the respondents had positive feeling towards Grammar. From the first questions that 67% of the students were interested in learning Grammar. Then, the second question also revealed that 68% of the students liked to learn Grammar. We can see from another finding that 71% of
the students reported that learning Grammar is fun. The problem was only when they feel that Grammar is difficult.

THE STUDY
This part of this study contains context of the study, participants, instrument of data collection, data collection procedure, and data analysis. This study answered the following question: “What do the students do to overcome the grammatical difficulties in writing?"

Context of the Study
This research is about the students’ strategies to overcome grammatical difficulties in writing. This research examines how students solve problems, primarily on grammatical problems, when writing. Qualitative research used in this research. This research was conducted at the Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Salatiga. In FLA, Academic Writing is a compulsory subject. The students should pass this class if they want to take other writing classes. This course is one of the difficult subjects because the students must have the ability to write well, especially about grammar.

Participants
Participants of this study was from the Faculty of Language and Arts students. This study used purposive samples, especially quota sampling used in this research to collect the data. In the module made by International Labour
Office (2009, p.5) “quota sampling refers to selection with controls, ensuring that specified numbers (quotas) are obtained from each specified population subgroup (e.g. persons classified by relevant characteristics)”. This study needs ten undergraduate students at Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, studying in the English Department. They who have passed the Academic Writing class. The students have been chosen based on the students’ grades (grade A to C) they got in academic writing class. Two students was selected for each grade. By asking some students about their grade in Academic Writing Class, the interviewer found her participants based on the predetermined criteria.

**Table 1 : Participants Background**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>AB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>AB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection Instruments

This study employs interview only as the instrument to collect the data. The interview will be conducted to know deeply students’ experience when they joined the Academic Writing class. Semi-structured interviews will be used in this research. Indonesian will be used in the interview process to help the students to feel free in expressing their opinions. Later, audio recording equipment will be chosen to record the data for this research. This recording method allowed a complete record of interview for analysis, including what is said and the interaction between interviewer and interviewee.

Below is the list of questions for the interviews:

1. What do you think about writing an academic paper in Academic Writing class?
2. a. Do you find problems in writing?
   b. What kind of problems do you face in writing?
3. What do you think about grammar in writing?
4. Do you find any grammatical problems in writing?
5. What do you do to solve those problems?

Data Collection Procedure

The procedures of collecting data would be done by some steps. First, the interviewer looked for 10 students who had passed the Academic Writing class with the predetermined criteria. Next, the interviewer met with the students based on the time specified. Last, the students who had been selected were interviewed.
Data Analysis Procedure

Thematic analysis was used in this research. According to Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017), is a qualitative method used for research and analyzing large amounts of qualitative data. Most researchers consider thematic analysis to be a very useful method in capturing meaning within a data set. It focuses on the human experience subjectively. This approach emphasizes the participants’ perceptions, feelings and experiences as the important object of the study. Thematic analysis was used in this study because the researcher explored in details the qualitative data that is owned to find the link between patterns in a phenomenon and explain the extent to which a phenomenon occurs.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

My research question of this study is ‘What do the students do to overcome the grammatical difficulties in writing?’ In this study, I researched about the students’ problems in writing, and I was trying to find out the grammatical difficulties in writing and the students’ strategies to overcome their difficulties. Ten students of Faculty of Language and Arts have been interviewed. The results of the interview, I find some general problems faced by students. From general problems, grammar is the second problem the students faced. Therefore, some strategies have chosen by students to overcome their problems. Based on my findings, there are some general problems faced by students in making an academic paper in Academic Writing class. Below is Table 1, it is about the problems that students faced in writing.
Table 2: General Problems in Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Problems in writing</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Choosing words</td>
<td>6 participants</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>4 participants</td>
<td>1, 3, 9, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Paraphrasing</td>
<td>4 participants</td>
<td>2, 5, 8, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Referencing</td>
<td>3 participants</td>
<td>2, 5, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Summarizing</td>
<td>2 participants</td>
<td>5, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>2 participants</td>
<td>1, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Putting the ideas into writing</td>
<td>2 participants</td>
<td>1, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Citing</td>
<td>2 participants</td>
<td>2, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Quoting</td>
<td>1 participant</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Finding the synonym of word</td>
<td>1 participant</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Understanding the topic</td>
<td>1 participant</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Finding the ideas</td>
<td>1 participant</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Synthesizing</td>
<td>1 participant</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Finding the sources</td>
<td>1 participant</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from the Table 2 above, on number 1, choosing words is a big problem for FBS students, and grammar is at the second place of the writing aspects that the participants considered problematic. When compared with Abbas, M. F. F., & Herdi, H. (2018, p.106), he stated that “the students felt difficult when developing and organizing ideas, using correct grammar and word choices, and applying correct writing mechanics, such as the use of capital letter, spelling, and
punctuation”. His findings are almost the same with this study, but here there is no applying correct writing mechanics. Grammar will be explained more in this paper because the aim of this paper is to overcome the grammatical difficulties in writing. The proof can be seen on the data below:

Table 3: Grammatical Difficulties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Grammatical Difficulties</th>
<th>Frequent</th>
<th>Participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Making grammatical sentences</td>
<td>5 participants</td>
<td>1, 4, 6, 7, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Making Passive Sentences</td>
<td>3 participants</td>
<td>2, 3, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Choosing the correct tense</td>
<td>3 participants</td>
<td>3, 8, 9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those participants have the same level, but they have different difficulties in writing. As we can see, there are three grammatical difficulties faced by students. The first problem is making grammatical sentences. The students felt difficult to make grammatical sentences, such as arrange the words grammatically. Second is making passive sentences. Only three of ten participants experienced this problem. Last, the students felt difficult to choose the correct tenses when they were made some sentences. All students have their own difficulties. One by one of those difficulties would be explained below.

Making grammatical sentences

Some problems faced by students in making academic paper. One of them is grammatical sentences. This problem is one of problems for English education students. The results can be seen in Table 3. Five of ten students have
experienced this problem. According to them, they felt difficulties in making grammatical sentences. As can be seen by the following statement from Participant 1:

“It is difficult in arranging the sentence and structure of the grammar. The point is we must know grammar when writing academic papers. If we do not know grammar, the reader is confused. If I have trouble in making sentences with the correct structure and grammar, I read journals mostly. So I must get used to reading a journal” (Interview Session, February 5, 2019).

From Participant 1’s statement, it could be seen that making grammatical sentence is difficult. She thought that grammar is important in writing. Therefore, when she got that problem in grammar, she just choose to read more journals to make her understand more how to make grammatical sentences well. The same statement come from participant 4:

“It is also difficult in making sentences with the correct structure and grammar. I used the internet to check whether the grammar that I used was correct or not. I also sometimes look for synonyms on the internet. When I had trouble, sometimes I asked a friend” (Interview Session, February 5, 2019).

As we can see that this participant also experienced the same problem. She overcame that problem by asking her lecturer or her friend, or even through the internet too. A similar point was also stated by Participant 6:
“Saya bingung dan merasa kesulitan dalam menyusun kalimat sesuai dengan struktur dan tata bahasanya. Untuk mengatasi permasalahan saya, terkadang saya menggunakan grammarly.com ya yang ada di internet itu, atau terkadang saya juga tanya teman” (Interview Session, February 15, 2019).

“I am confused and feel it difficult to arrange sentences based on the structure and grammar. Sometimes I use grammarly.com on the internet, or I asked some friends to solve my problem.” (Interview Session, February 15, 2019)

From Participant 6’s statement, it could be seen that this participant has the same problem with Participant 1, but they have different strategies to overcome their difficulties. This participant prefers to ask their friends or use the internet, especially grammarly.com, to solve her problem. We need to see another statement from participant 7:

"Kalau menurut saya tata bahasa itu sangat penting ya karena tanpa tata bahasa kalau dalam pembuatan makalah akademik itu kita akan kesulitan apalagi kalau kita bicara dalam konteks misal, kalau kita lemah di dalam tata bahasa, kita akan bingung dan kesulitan sendiri untuk merangkai kata kata secara akademik” (Interview Session, February 6, 2019).

“Based on my opinion, grammar is important because without grammar in making the academic paper we face the difficulties. Even we talk about the context, if we do not know grammar, we will be confused and have difficulties in arrange the sentence academically” (Interview Session, February 6, 2019).

From the statement above, we can conclude that grammar is important. There are many things happen, if we do not know grammar. Some participants stated that if they were weak in grammar, they would find difficulties and confused to compose words academically. We can also see from the participant 10’s statement:

“Membuat kalimat dengan tata bahasa yang sesuai dengan structure nya juga sulit. Biasanya saya kalau kesulitan ,saya lebih banyak membaca artikel atau jurnal how to paraphrase the sentences that could include in my sentences. Jadi contohnya ketika kita membuat quote kita harus memperhatikan bahasa yang kita gunakan agar tidak dianggap plagiarism” (Interview Session, February 6, 2019).
“Making sentences with the correct structure and grammar is also difficult. If I have the difficulties, I usually read more articles or journals how to paraphrase the sentences that could include in my sentences. So for example when we make a quote we must pay attention to the language we use so that it is not considered as plagiarism” (Interview Session, February 6, 2019).

All the learners had their own materials that perceived to be difficult. Most learners (5 out 10 Participants, 1, 4, 6, 7 and 10) said that making the grammatical sentences is difficult. It is a problem for them in making academic paper. Duques (1989, p.312) stated that “writing tasks often involve more complex grammatical structure and content that is less familiar, more abstract, and more logically organized than that used in everyday conversational speech”. The task of integrating several components of the writing process (Scardamalia, Bereiter and Goelman 1982) makes writing a difficult process to master, even for nondisabled students (Bereiter 1977). Sometimes when the students write sentences, they are confused how to compose the words to become sentences grammatically. Moreover, they are also confused whether the sentences they make is grammatically correct or not. Based on my experience in Academic Writing class, when the students want to make academic essay, they were confused in choosing the words. They were also confused how to make sentences grammatically. However, the students have some strategies to solve those problems. They prefer to ask their friends or asking their lecturer. Even they also read other journals or see on the internet to get what they need.
Making passive sentences

By interviewing the students in FBS, I know that making passive sentences is the second grammatical problem faced by the participants. They also said about their strategies to solve their difficulties in making an academic paper. As can be seen by the following statement from participant 2:

“As can be seen by the following statement from participant 2:

“Kalau untuk grammar di Academic Writing itu kan banyak menggunakan passive sentence ya jadi mungkin kalau membuat kalimat pasif itu lebih susah daripada membuat kalimat aktif. Kalau mengalami kesulitan biasanya saya konsultasi dengan dosen atau bertanya teman, kalau tidak lewat internet sih ” (Interview Session, February 7, 2019).

“Passive sentences will be used in grammar in Academic Writing. It uses a lot of passive sentences. Making passive sentences will be more difficult than making active sentences. If I felt difficulties, I asked a lecturer or a friend, also through internet” (Interview Session, February 7, 2019).

From Participant 2’s statement, we can conclude that she had the difficulties in making passive sentences. She said that she was able to make active sentences, but she felt difficulties in making the passive sentences. She also had her own strategies to solve her problems. She decided to ask her lecturer and friend or consult the internet. This statement is almost the same a that of Participant 3:


“I have difficulties about using passive voice. The first is if I do not know, I asked a friend to help correct my paper. It is called peer feedback if it is not wrong. I also saw in the internet. From the lecturer, it must just provide justification or feedback” (Interview Session, February 8, 2019).
From the statement by participant 3, we can see that she had also the same problem. It was about making the passive sentences. Her strategies were she tend to ask her friend to correct her paper and asked the lecturer to ask some feedback.

A similar point was also stated by Participant 5:

“Jadi kalau membuat makalah akademik itu kan menggunakan kalimat pasif, nah saya merasa kesulitan ketika membuat kalimat aktif menjadi pasif. Untuk mengatasi permasalahan saya, waktu itu saya konsultasi dengan dosen saya dan bertanya dengan teman yang lebih paham” (Interview Session, February 7, 2019).

“So if I make an academic paper, passive voice will be used. I found the difficulties when changing the active sentences to be passive. To solve my problem, at that time I consulted with my lecturer or asked my friend that understand more than me” (Interview Session, February 7, 2019).

As we can see, three participant have similar point. From participant 2, 3 and 5, they experienced the same difficulties, “making passive sentences”. Some students do not know how to make the passive sentences well. The passive voice is the grammatical construction in which a head noun functioning as the subject of a sentence, clause or verb is affected by the action of a verb or being acted upon by the verb. The noun functioning as the grammatical subject is typically the recipient of the action denoted by the verb rather than the agent, and may be used to avoid assigning responsibility to the doer (Choomthong 2011). Thus, in an English passive sentence, “the logical subject – the agent – moves out of the position of grammatical subject and is relegated to a by-phrase” (Brinton and Brinton 2010, p.131). Therefore, sometimes some students felt confused how to change the active sentences to be passive.
Choosing the correct tenses

Based on the data that I have got from the interview, some students are confused in using tenses in making an academic paper. I got 3 from 10 participants that I have interviewed faced that problem. They have the same problem in using tenses. There are many tenses. Each student has different difficulties in using tenses. Present tense, past tense, and past continuous become their difficulties. As can be seen the statement by participant 3:

“Saya mengalami kesulitan tentang penggunaan passive voice, terus tenses seperti past atau present. Dan saya juga kesulitan dalam penggunaan artikul sepeerti a, an dan the seperti itu. Yang pertama kadang kalau aku tidak tahu, aku meminta bantuan teman untuk mengoreksi, ini yang benar yang bagaimana, apa sih yang kurang dari academic paper ini. Namanya peer feedback ya kalau tidak salah. Kalau tidak ya saya liat internet. Kalau dari dosen pasti memberi pembenaran atau feedback” (Interview Session, February 8, 2019).

“I have difficulties in using passive voice, tenses such as past or present. And I also have difficulties in using article such as a, an and the. If I did not know, I asked a friend to correct my paper. It is called peer feedback if it is not wrong. I also saw on the internet or asked a lecturer. From lecturer, it just provides correction or feedback” (Interview Session, February 8, 2019).

From Participant 3’s statement, we know that she has the difficulties in using tenses. She was confused how to choose the correct tenses in making sentences or a paragraph. We also need see the other statement from other participant. As can be seen the statement by participant 8:

“Saya juga mengalami kesulitan pada tenses. Terkadang harusnya menggunakan present perfect tapi saya menggunakan present tense. Terkadang yang harusnya present jadi past, yang harusnya past jadi past continuous. Jadi terkadang ketuker gitu. Untuk strateginya, Saya menemui teman untuk mendapatkan feedback, jadi minta teman untuk mengoreksi grammar. Kalau dosen sih iya tapi kalau dosen biasanya lebih meneliti content dan word choicenya. Kalau untuk grammarnya sih terkadang tidak” (Interview Session, February 8, 2019).

“I also experienced difficulties with tenses. Sometimes it should use the present perfect, but I use the present tense. Sometimes the present tense should be past
tense, which sometimes it should be past continuous. For the strategy, I met friends to get feedback, so ask friends to correct grammar. For the lecturer, she usually check the content and word choice” (Interview Session, February 8, 2019).

Participant 8 have the same problem with the previous participant. She also felt the difficulties in using tenses, but this participant experienced the difficulties in the different tenses. Participant 9 also faced the same problem. As can be seen by participant 9’s statement:

“Kalau saya membuat makalah akademik itu permasalahannya di grammar, mungkin kalau misal per kalimat saya masih paham tapi kalau kalimat itu dijabarkan dalam bentuk paragraf saya kesulitan, karena kalau konteksnya hal itu sudah terjadi atau sedang terjadi kan itu kita pakai tenses yang berbeda nah itu kadang yang bikin aku sedikit bingung. Aku harus pakai tenses yang mana untuk di kalimat ini. Terkadang aja di dalam satu kalimat terdiri dari beberapa tenses seperti past tense sama past continuous. Solusinya jadi saya lebih melihat ke jurnal lain. Seperti memahami gaya bahasanya bagaimana yang baik dan lebih formal. Seperti juga kata penghubung misalnya furthermore, moreover itu kan juga susah banget kalau misalkan kita tidak tahu mana yang formal. Kalau aku sih lebih sering baca aja” (Interview Session, February 6, 2019).

“If I am making an academic paper, the problem is grammar. I am still understand if it just per sentence, but if the sentence is spell out in paragraph. I feel difficulties. If the context has happened or is happening, we use different tenses, that’s sometimes makes me a little confused. Sometimes in one sentence consists of several tenses such as past tense and past continuous. The solution is I look more at other journals. Like understanding experts language style more formally” (Interview Session, February 6, 2019).

Some statements from the Participant 3, 8 and 9, we know that they have the same difficulties in using tenses. They were confused how to choose the correct tenses. Among most common mistakes made by students was inappropriate use of tenses. Their arguments were that students were unable to render the tense in question because of lack of structural correspondence between the mother tongue and the target language.
Result I have got by interviewing ten EFL students in Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, some students got the difficulties in making an academic paper in Academic Writing class. If we want to compare the result of some expert in other country, we do not have the differences. It almost has the same result.

**Strategies to overcome the grammatical difficulties in writing an academic paper**

As we can see, there are many problems above. By those problems, the students have some strategies to solve their difficulties in making an academic paper. By interviewing some students, I have got the data how the students solve their problems in writing. As can be seen from the data below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Frequent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asking friends</td>
<td>7 participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking a lecturer</td>
<td>5 participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing on the internet</td>
<td>4 participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading other journals</td>
<td>3 participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Grammar Book</td>
<td>1 participant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the Table, we know that asking friends is one of good strategies to overcome the students’ difficulties in writing the academic paper in Academic Writing class. One by one strategies will be explained more here.
1. Asking some friends

This is one of good strategies in writing which has many students choose it. As we can be seen in the table above, Seven of ten students choose this strategie to solve their problems in writing. Below is the prove of the interviews’ result. Here, i just provide some examples from 4 participants.

Participant 3

“Yang pertama kadang kalau aku tidak tahu, aku meminta bantuan teman untuk mengoreksi, Namanya peer feedback ya kalau tidak salah”.
(First, if I did not know, I asked my friend to correct my paper. The name is peer feedback if it is not wrong)

Participant 5

“Untuk mengatasi permasalahan saya, waktu itu saya bertanya dengan teman yang lebih paham”.
(To overcome my problem, at that time I asked my friend which understand more)

Participant 7

“Saya minta temen saya untuk mengecek grammar saya”.
(I asked my friend to check my grammar)

Participant 8

“Untuk strateginya, saya menemui teman untuk mendapatkan feedback, jadi minta teman untuk mengoreksi grammar”.
(For the strategies, I met my friend to get a feedback, so I asked my friend to correct my grammar)

As we can be seen, some students prefer to choose asking their friends. Their friends which understand more in writing than them. Based on the students’ statements, comment or suggestion from their friends are very useful for them. The students can improve their writing from their friends’ comment or suggestion.
2. Asking a lecturer

The next strategy is asking a lecturer. The students chose this strategy to overcome their problem in writing. There are five of ten participants prefer to choose asking a lecturer. A lecturer will be asked by students to help them. Here, I only provide some examples of the students’ statement from the interviews’ result.

**Participant 2**
“Kalau kesulitan biasanya saya konsultasi dengan dosen”.
(If I had the difficulties, I usually consulted with my lecturer)

**Participant 5**
“Untuk mengatasi permasalahan saya, waktu itu saya konsultasi dengan dosen saya”.
(To overcome my problem, at that time I consulted with my lecturer)

**Participant 8**
“Kalau meminta bantuan dosen sih iya tapi kalau dosen biasanya lebih meneliti content dan word choicenya. Kalau untuk grammarnya sih terkadang tidak”.
(If I asked help from my lecturer, it must be, but the lecturer usually see the content and word choice. For the grammar, sometimes it does not check)

As we can see, the students asked their lecturer to help them in writing. The students considered that a lecturer is able to help them in writing. They need some suggestions or comments from the lecturer. From it, the students can improve their ability in writing.

3. Seeing on the internet

By the interviewing results, out of ten participants only four that use google. They prefer to see on the internet. They are Participant 2, 3, 4 and 6. However, here only three participants will be taken to be the examples.

**Participant 2**
“Kalau kesulitan biasanya saya konsultasi dengan dosen atau bertanya teman, kalau tidak lewat internet sih.”
(If I had the difficulties, I consulted with the lecturer or asked my friend, if not through the internet)

**Participant 4**

“Saya menggunakan internet untuk mengecek apakah tata bahasa yang saya gunakan sudah benar atau belum. Saya juga kadang mencari sinonim di internet”.

(I use the internet to check whether the grammar I use is correct or not. I also sometimes look for the synonyms on the internet)

**Participant 6**

“Untuk mengatasi permasalahan saya, terkadang saya menggunakan grammarly.com ya yang ada di internet itu”.

(To solve my problems, sometimes I use grammarly.com on the internet)

Through some students’ statements above, we conclude that the students are more comfortable with the internet. If the students did not understand when they did their paper, they prefer to search what they need on internet. Warschauer & Whittaker (1997) describe there are several possible reasons of using the internet for English teaching, first, it is believed that the internet is able to promote language learning, and second, it creates optimal conditions for learning to write, since it provides an authentic audience for written communication. From the internet students can search anything they want. Through the internet, students can improve their writing.

From the students’ strategies, the students can solve their problems in writing. As we can be seen, there are four strategies chosen by students. In their opinion, asking their friends, asking their lecturer, seeing other journals, and looking at the internet can make them write an academic paper easily. They can share their problems to their friends or lecturer. Even sometimes their friends and lecturer give them a feedback, so they can improve their writing.
4. Reading other journals

The other students’ strategie is reading other journals. There 4 participants choose reading other journals. Participant 1, 7, 9 and 10 prefer to choose reading other journals. Below is some examples from the interviews’ result.

**Participant 1**
“Kalau saya kesulitan membuat kalimat dengan struktur dan tata bahasa yang benar, paling saya baca jurnal. Jadi saya baca baca ulang gitu.”
(If I had the difficulties in making sentences with the correct grammar, I just read other journals. So I read more journals)

**Participant 9**
“Jadi saya lebih melihat ke jurnal lain. Seperti memahami gaya bahasanya bagaimana yang baik dan lebih formal. Kalau aku sih lebih sering baca aja”.
(So, I look more at other journals. Like understanding the language style how good and more formal. I just read more)

**Participant 10**
“Biasanya saya kalau kesulitan ,saya lebih banyak membaca artikel”.
(If I usually had the difficulties, I read more the articles)

Based on the students’ statements above, when the students had some problems in writing, they prefer to read other journals and learn from them. The students want to understand which one a good language style and which one is more formal.

5. Open Grammar Book

This is one of other strategies used by a student. Only one student from ten students choose this strategy.

**Participan 7**

“Kesulitannya itu ketika disuruh membuat draft dan sebagai nya sih, jadi saya sebelum mengumpulkan pekerjaan saya ke dosen pasti saya minta temen saya untuk mengecek grammar saya, atau saya membuka buku grammar yang lain hanya untuk recall saja sih.”
(The difficulties was when I was tod by my lecturer to make a draft and so on, so before I submitted my work to the lecturer, I asked my friend to check my grammar, or I opened another grammar book just for recall)
Participant 7 used some strategies to solve her problems. Her strategies as the writer explained before, but one of her strategy she used was open grammar book just to recall.

**Conclusion**

This research was conducted to answer the research question, “What do the students do to overcome the grammatical difficulties in writing?” Therefore, this research examines the problems experienced by the students in writing academic paper and what the students did to overcome these problems. This study disclosed three grammatical difficulties that students faced during the Academic Writing course and four strategies that the students did to overcome their difficulties. The grammatical difficulties the students faced are making grammatical sentences, making passive sentences, and choosing the correct tenses. Also, the strategies are asking other friends, asking a lecturer, reading other journals, and seeing on the internet.

Based on my research, by reading many journal articles, asking friends, looking at the internet, even asking a lecturer, the students can improve their ability in grammar. Moreover, other strategies in writing can be used by students to overcome their problems. The students should understand about grammar in writing. Learning grammar is not easy. The students should understand more about isolated grammar first. They should understand about the structure. By this way, the students’ ability in writing can improve well.
This study is not without flaws. One limitation is that it focused only on students’ difficulties and strategies to overcome the difficulties. For further research, the teacher’s strategies may include. Also, another limitation is only interview used in this study to get the data. Questionnaire will be used in the further research. In my opinion, this study need more participants to know more what difficulties the students face in writing. This study examined about grammar, but based on the students’ interview, grammar is the second problem for the students. The first problem students faced was about choosing words. Therefore, maybe for further research, difficulties in choosing words might be discussed.

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