# THE CORRELATION BETWEEN THE STUDENTS' PAST TENSE MASTERY AND THEIR ABILITY IN TRANSLATING NARRATIVE TEXTS

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**Abstract**

Most students got confused and difficulty when translating from Indonesian into English. They were confused to use active voice or passive voice in past tense to state past activities. Therefore, to solve the problem they needed to be trained to use past tense regularly. One of the ways was by asking them to translate Indonesian narrative texts into English. The objective of this research was to find out the correlation between the students' past tense mastery and their ability in translating narrative texts of grade eleven students of SMAN 1 Pagelaran. Two kinds of tests were administered. They were grammatical test and translation test. In the grammatical test, multiple choice tests were used, while in translation test, each student was asked to translate a kind of narrative text into English. The method of this research was the correlational research. Data were analyzed using r-Product Moment. The result of $r_{xy}$ was 0.772. The p-value in 5% was 0.355 and in 1% was 0.456. So, the result showed that there was a significant correlation between the students' past tense mastery and their ability in translating narrative texts of grade eleven students of SMAN 1 Pagelaran. Based on the result of the research, it was important both for the English teachers and the students to realize one of the factors that gave positive contribution to the students' ability in translating narrative texts was their past tense mastery.

*Keywords*: Past tense mastery, translation achievement, narrative text.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

SMAN 1 Pagelaran is one of the Senior High Schools in Lampung that always concerns to all subjects and one of them is English lesson. The students learn English because it is one of the required lessons taught in this school. There are many materials learned in English. One of the materials is understanding a text but the most popular text taught in this subject is about narrative texts.

The English teachers frequently use narrative texts to teach the students. It is based on the curriculum that the students should study the texts from grade ten until grade twelve. The students are frequently asked by their English teachers to translate the texts and then retell them in front of the class.

Translating always has a close relation to the Senior High School students' English subject. The students must be conquering in four important English skills such as, listening, speaking, reading and writing. Writing is closely related to translating. When the students are asked by teacher to write a story or sentences in English, they will compose it in Indonesian form primarily. After that, they change the first language or Indonesian form into English. The activity means they are translating. So, the researcher uses translation as her research because it has a close relation to Senior High School's subject.

Based on the descriptions above, the students must obligate translation ability to aid them to translate narrative texts. Translating is not an easy thing. Translation is the process from changing an authentic text which is named as the source text with a replacement. It is named as the target text or a process from changing a text in one language to another one by a text (House, 2009).

A written form is the media used in translating as in translating a narrative text. Translating narrative text means translating a story in the text. The story tells about a fairy tale or legend that happened in the past time. This text purposes to amuse the readers. It retells past stories and absolutely uses past tense.

Past tense is found in some texts and one of them is a narrative text. The aim of narrative text is to entertain the readers. In the narrative text, the primary characteristics are the problems that happen and the ways to solve them. There are many kinds of narrative text contents such as, fairy tale, imagination and fiction (Djuhari, 2009).

The narrative texts use past tense particularly the simple past tense as the verbs that express activities in the texts as a clarification simple past tense is defined as the activities or condition started and ended at a particular time in the past. Past tense explains a form of a verb used to describe an action in the past to ease them to achieve success in order to translate narrative texts from Indonesian into English (Azar, 1989).

## 2. THE CORRELATION BETWEEN PAST TENSE MASTERY AND THE ABILITY IN TRANSLATING NARRATIVE TEXT

The tense forms are made to the times that express an action or incident. They can be concluded into three, the present, the past, and the future. Those are used to tell the activities in specific times.  In sentence forms, simple forms like continuous/progressive the form which is in the process. The form that has been in the process is the perfect tense, the perfect continuous tense is the form which has happened and the process happened and ended in the previous time is past tense  (Salim, et al, 2008).

The past tense is the tense used to describe actions or events which happened in the past and referred to the past events. It means that past tense is used to indicate something that happened in the past. This kind of tense is showed by the past form of the verb. Every activity belongs to the previous time is a form of past tense (Tarmizi, 2009).

Simple past tense is used to express some actions that happened at the specific time in the past. It explains frequent activities and has become the primary moment in the previous time. The simple past tense describes activities that were completed at a specific time before the present (Barry, 2002).

The focus of this research is only to the past tense especially the simple past tense. However, the other part of tenses in the past frequently used in narrative texts is the past continuous tense. That is why, it is also discussed in this research. The past continuous tense explains the activities that occur at the same time in the past. Past continuous tense is not used for simple sentences. It is usually used to express a tentative situation around us as a special time in the past. It draws two different activities that happen in the same period of times (Hewings, 1999).

Translation can be defined as a diversion of a text in source language (SL) with an equivalent text in target language (TL). It is a skill where the translator's identity can be reflected into his opinion. Translation is a creative process that always gives a freedom or choice to the translator (Catford, 1965, Hartono, 2009).

Translation is rendering the meaning of a source language (SL) text into the target language (TL) text. So, it is to ensure the SL meaning to be approximately similar with the TL. The structure will be preserved as closely as possible (Newmark, 1988).

There are several translators who thought about kinds of translation such as setting literal and idiomatic translations into translation method. Here are kinds of translation positioned outside the translation method. The types are dynamic translation, pragmatic translation, aesthetic-poetic translation, ethnographic translation and linguistic translation (Hartono, 2009).

The process of translating is the motion of activities where the translator shares his knowledge, skills, abilities, and habits to transfer a message from the SL into TL. There are three steps of process of translating. The steps are analyzing source language messages, transferring and reconstructing messages into target language (Djuhari, 2004). These processes are seen in figure 1. below.
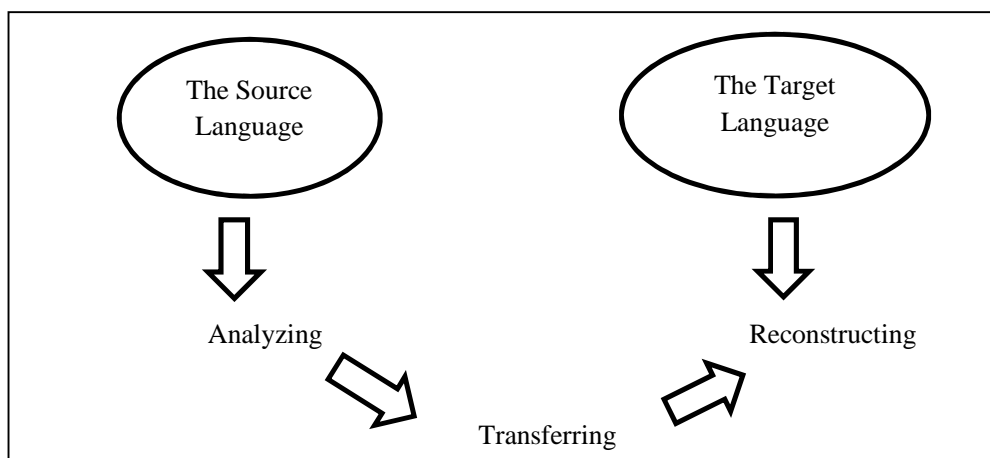
Figure 1. The Process of Translating

In the figure, the analyzing is the step where the structural and the meaning of each word correlations and words combinations are analyzed. In this step, the produced words are analyzed based on the correlation amongst grammars, the word meaning or word combination, textual and contextual meanings. It is done for understanding messages in the texts.

The transferring, here, the matter that has been analyzed in the analyzing step will be transferred in the translator's mind from the SL into the TL. In this step, the brain working operates to find out its each equivalent information known from the first process.

The reconstructing is the step where a translator rewrites or retells the matter that has been refined on the first step and second step. So, the results of his translation have natural meaning and style and can be received into TL. In reconstructing step, the translator formulates several exist information in his mind and the information demand him to be as precise as possible by attending the structures of SL. The last step is evaluating. Evaluating is the step where some weaknesses and abnormal meanings can be improved recurrently by comparing and regulating SL messages with TL messages.

Narrative text is a kind of fairy tale story that has one or more problems to be solved in the text. It has a primary goal. It is to interest the readers. Narrative texts entertain the readers with difficult problems in the story and the ways to solve them (Sudarwati, 2006).

Narrative text is a kind of text which the contents tell a fictive story happened in the past time. The goal of this text is to entertain the readers. Narrative text can be fable, legend, and folktale stories. In the text, there is a conflict or problem followed with the solving (Purwanti, 2013).Narrative texts have some kinds of stories such as legend, fairy tale and others story. One of the examples is fable as a kind of fiction story as seen in figure 2. below.



Figure 2. The Example of Fable "The Lion and The Mouse"

The figure is one of the narrative texts. The story is called a fable story because fable is a kind of animals' story. Mostly, it is used by some parents to make their children sleep because it is one kind of

fiction stories happened in the past. It has close a relation with past tenses as it is used to tell activities in previous times. It shows that this fable story is closely associated with the past tense.

## 3. RESEARCH METHOD

Two instruments were used in obtaining the data. The instruments were on the past tense and the translation narrative texts. In the past tense test, students had to choose one the best choice from four options (A, B, C, and D) in multiple choices form. Those questions were the grammatical tests especially, about the simple past tense and the past continuous tense consisted of 40 questions. They just needed to choose the best and appropriate verbs with the sentences in the questions. Then, the researcher gave the students 60 minutes to do the test.

Meanwhile, for the test of translating narrative texts the researcher gave every Senior High School student the same Indonesian narrative text. The text consisted of ten sentences. After that, the researcher gave the students 30 minutes to translate the text into English.

The procedure of this research was described into four steps such as determining the population and sample, selecting materials, administering the past tense test and translation of narrative text test to the students, and the last was analyzing data. In determining the population and sample, the researcher stipulated the grade eleven students of SMAN 1 Pagelaran as the population. Then, she used a random sampling technique to get the sample.The technique was a probability sampling procedure that gave every element in the target population an equal chance to be selected and tended to produce representative samples.  So, the random sampling technique was the best way to take a representative sample (Sugiyono, 2010). In selecting materials, the researcher gave the past tense test and translation of narrative text tests based on the materials of the second semester of grade eleven.

Moreover, for the first test the researcher did was administering the past tense test. The test consisted of grammatical questions in form of the simple past tense and the past continuous tense. The second test the researcher gave was administering translation of a narrative text in Indonesian form and asked the students to translate it into grammatical English.

After the two kinds of test had finished, the researcher analyzed the students' scores which meant analyzing data. She evaluated the scores after the students did the past tense test and translation of narrative text test. Finally, the research of the two tests showed whether the students' past tense mastery and their ability in translating narrative texts of SMAN 1 Pagelaran had correlation or not after she measured using r- Product Moment.The formula was presented in figure 3. below.

$$r_{xy} = \frac{N \sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{\{N \sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2\}\{N \sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2\}}}$$
$$df = N-2$$

Figure 3. The Equation of r-Product Moment

## 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The students who have high scores of past tense mastery give positive contributions for their ability in translating narrative texts. This is proved by the fact that the students who pass the test of past tense mastery well get good scores from their ability in translating narrative text test. Moreover, students who do not pass the test of past tense mastery well get bad scores from their ability in translating narrative text test. This can be seen in table 1 below.

Table 1:    The High Scores of The Students' Past Tense Mastery and Their Ability in Translating Narrative Texts

| Students' Number | The Scores of The Students' Past Tense Mastery | The Scores of The Students' Ability in Translating Narrative Text |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | 83 | 85 |
| 8 | 90 | 80 |
| 16 | 98 | 76 |
| 18 | 90 | 76 |
| 22 | 90 | 79 |

In the table, it is the correlation of the students' high scores. The students who do the test of past tense mastery and get good scores have good levels in translating narrative texts. It is shown from their results of doing those tests that the students who get good scores of past tense mastery test also get high scores in translating narrative texts.

Moreover, the correlations of the students' scores in the tests of past tense mastery and their ability in translating narrative text are also shown through the students who get bad scores. The students who get bad scores of past tense mastery test also get bad scores in the test of their ability in translating narrative text. This can be seen clearly in table 2 in the following.

Table 2: The Low Scores of The Students' Past Tense Mastery and Their Ability in Translating Narrative Text

| Student's Number | The Scores of The Students' Past Tense Mastery | The Scores of The Students' Ability in Translating Narrative Text |
|---|---|---|
| 3 | 45 | 20 |
| 20 | 55 | 30 |
| 25 | 23 | 20 |
| 26 | 60 | 25 |
| 27 | 38 | 50 |

In the table, it is the correlation of the students' low scores. It can be seen clearly that almost all students who fail to pass the test of students' past tense mastery result bad translation in translating narrative texts. It means that the students, who do the test of past tense mastery and get bad scores, have bad levels to translate narrative texts. It can be shown from their results of doing the tests.

From the statistical analysis, it is found that there is a positive correlation between the students' past tense mastery and their ability in translating narrative texts. It is proved by the value of $r_{xy}$ that is higher than p-value. The value of $r_{xy}$ is 0.772. Based on the r table with N = 31, it shows that p-value is 0.355 in 5% and 0,456 in 1%. So, it describes clearly that the value of $r_{xy}$ is higher than the p-value.

From the result of the research, it can be concluded that the alternative hypothesis ($H_a$) is accepted and the null hypothesis ($H_o$) is rejected. So, there is correlation between the students' past tense mastery and their ability in translating narrative texts. Moreover, these facts indicate that the students' past tense mastery gives a useful contribution for their ability in translating narrative texts as tense is the use of verb variation as predicate based on timing rules. The tense is the most distinguishable transition from Indonesian grammar into English grammar because there is no timing rule in Indonesian language to express activities or events. The tenses frequently become problem to be understood (Djuhari, 2004).

Past tense is part of the tenses used to talk and write about past time events occurred at a specific time in the past. The basic form is the simple past tense. However, there are others verbs for special meanings used. The verbs are the past perfect and the past progressive (Benson and Byrd, 2001).

Therefore, the students should really have good mastery of past tense and ability in translating narrative texts. Narrative text is a kind of texts that include some stories or legends. The aim of narrative texts is to entertain the readers. The main characteristic is the problems and the steps taken to solve the problems as the solutions (Djuhari, 2007).Translation can be defined as the activity that changes an authentic text with another one or a process where changing a text from one language to another language by a text (House,2009).

## 5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the result of the research, the researcher concludes that there is a significant correlation between the students' past tense mastery and their ability in translating narrative texts of grade eleven of SMAN 1 Pagelaran. The conclusion is taken based on four considerations. The considerations are the average score of the students' past tense mastery, the average score of the students' ability in translating narrative texts, the results obtained from the calculation of the correlation between the students' past tense mastery and their ability in translating narrative text and the last is hypothesis of the research.

Therefore, there are some suggestions for the students of Senior High School and the English teachers. The students really need to master structure or grammar especially the past tense in order to be able to translate narrative texts well. The other suggestion for them is they should improve their past tense mastery because past tense mastery gives positive improvements for their ability in translating narrative texts.

Furthermore, there are some suggestions for the English teachers. First, it is important both for the teachers and students to realize that one of the factors that give positive contributions to the students' ability in translating narrative texts is their mastery of past tense. Therefore, the teachers have to be more serious and careful in teaching grammar especially past tense. Second, they must pay attention much more on students' comprehension of past tense because past tense is one of easier ways to make them able to translate narrative texts.

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