Natural and Academic Factors
Causing Students Made Grammatical Problems
in Constructing Passive Voice in English

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Abstrak

Makalah yang merupakan pengembangan dari hasil penelitian yang dilakukan tahun 2011-2012 ini membahas faktor-faktor alamiah dan akademis yang menyebabkan mahasiswa S2 PPs UNP membuat masalah ketatabahasaan dalam menulis konstruksi pasif bahasa Inggris sebagaimana ditemukan dalam tesis mereka. Kesalahan tatabahasa dalam menulis konstruksi pasif dapat disebabkan oleh faktor alamiah kebahasaan si penulis maupun faktor akademis. Faktor-faktor alamiah-kebahasaan yang menyebabkan munculnya kesalahan tersebut dapat berupa faktor bahasa pertama, kesungguhan menulis, dan kurangnya latihan menulis. Faktor akademis yang menyebabkan ini terjadi adalah arah pengajaran-pembelajaran tatabahasa, materi ajar, dan banyaknya perbedaan fitur-fitur tatabahasa antara bahasa Inggris dengan bahasa Indonesia.

Kata/frasa kunci: *natural, academic, passive voice, grammar, English, thesis*

A. Introduction

In the teaching-learning processes of a language, whether it is the first language (L1), the second language (L2), and/or a foreign language (FL), linguistic and grammatical descriptions and conclusions are needed in order to bring the language features into the practical actions in the classrooms. Among the others, the grammatical rules and features of the learnt language have to be accommodated in the language teaching programs. The necessity becomes higher in the teaching-learning of foreign language, like in the teaching-learning of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Indonesia. The teaching-learning processes of an FL in the classroom action are mostly the kind of manipulated situations; they are not naturally real. However, it does not mean that all actions in language classroom are synthetic ones; classroom activities need be created and be conditioned in such a way that they are in real situations.

In addition, the success of language teaching and learning of a language, including in EFL, is academically and practically indicated by the performance of learners' skills, namely: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. To have better language skills, the linguistic and non-linguistic factors should be involved in the practical activities. Theoretically, the linguistic rules and grammatical features are really needed in building and developing linguistic and communicative competence. Language with good grammar, especially in written language, becomes the academic and practical indicators for the learners of language. In accordance with this, the learners of postgraduate program of English have to write in grammatical sentences in their theses and other academic writings. It is right to say that educated people are those who are able to read and to write (see Kramsch, 2001:55).

Based on a research conducted in the Postgraduate Program (PPs) The State University of Padang (UNP) in 2012 (Mukhaiyar and Jufrizal, 2012), there are still many grammatical problems faced and made by postgraduate students in constructing sentences, both in active and passive voices. Those are found in their theses, their final scientific writings. Academically, this condition is not academically welcome; thesis as the final project written by the learners should be error free; no many serious problematic sentences. Normally, they had been following academic and procedural stages before they handed the theses. Serious attention on their theses indicated that there are many grammatical problems faced and made by the learners. The research did not study all types of grammatical problems made by the

students, but it just focused on the analysis of grammatical problems made by students in constructing the passive voice as found in their theses. Therefore, this paper does not talk about all grammatical problems made by the postgraduate students of English Department of PPs UNP found in their theses either. This paper focuses on the discussion of the natural and academic factors which cause the students made ungrammatical passive voice constructions.

The data presented and analyzed in this paper are collected from the theses written by postgraduate students of PPs UNP graduated from 2001 to March 2012. There are 363 theses written by the students, and the sources of data were 40 theses taken randomly from the all theses (11.02%). This paper particularly discusses the natural and academic factors which probably cause the students wrote ungrammatical passive voice. The analysis is based on the related theories of linguistic typology, especially grammatical typology on passive constructions. The discussion is related to the use of voice systems in written language and scientific papers, as well. As the further analysis and discussion of the research results before, it is expected that this paper gives deeper and detailed information about students' difficulties and problems in constructing and using English passive voice.

B. Brief Review of Related Theories
1. Grammar Teaching and Learning of EFL at University

Many definitions about language have been proposed by linguists in order to describe what the language is. Bauer (2007:1), for instance, argues that language can be viewed from many sides. Language can be seen as a social fact, as a psychological state, as a set of structure, or as a collection of outputs. In accordance with language as a set of structure, it is not questioned anymore that language has components, rules, organizations, and systematic properties which enable humans to communicate their ideas and messages naturally in communication events. In this sense, a language has forms, meanings, functions, and values. That is why languages have essential roles in humans' life individually, socially, and culturally (see also Duranti, 1997:7; Cruse, 2000:6)

In educational statement, Stern (1994) states that language is the systems of sounds, words, and meanings which can be understood, taught, and learned from generation to the next generations. It is also socio-cultural entities that should be possessed by the speakers in particular society and speech community. Rules governing the systems and levels of language used by human beings as the cultural convention in verbal communication are linguistically referred as grammar, a technical term lexically means 'the art of writing'. This term comes to linguistics with extended meaning as 'the overall studies about language'. Then, the term grammar becomes more specific, and it refers to the studies of the systems and rules of language in phonological, morphological, syntactical, and semantic levels. In recent development, linguists use the grammar to mean the systems and rule of morphological and syntactical levels only (see further Lyons, 1997). In this paper, grammar refers to the systems and rules possessed by natural languages in morphosyntactic levels and they are used in standard style of the language. This definition can be categorized as the pedagogical grammar or educational grammar (see Tonkyn in Bygate et.al. (eds.), 1994; Westney in Odlin (ed.), 1994).

In all programs of language teaching and learning, the teaching and learning processes of grammar are the main part of the whole parts. It is believed that language can be taught and learned because it has grammar, the description of language systems and rules. As it is the core of linguistic studies, grammar becomes the core of language teaching programs, as well. Teaching and learning language should be psychologically and academically begun with appropriate levels of grammar teaching. All types of language levels and uses need rules and regulation since language is systematic; they are the components of grammar. Even, a very simple form of language, as a matter of fact, it has grammar, then.

Foreign language teaching and learning processes in all levels, say English in Indonesia, need the teaching and learning of English grammar. And of course, the need for teaching and learning grammar of English as a foreign language (EFL) at university level should not be questioned anymore. According to Tonkyn in Bygate et.al. (eds.) (1994:1 – 2),

teaching and learning a language, whether it is the first, second, or foreign language, should include the teaching and learning its grammar. The necessity of introducing and teaching grammatical features becomes higher in the teaching and learning a foreign language, like teaching and learning English in Indonesia. The English teachers have to realize that formal and academic situations like in the classroom are the most common ways of expecting the students to learn and to use the learnt language. It is hard for the teachers to control the use of English outside the classroom; the environment cannot give natural corrections if the learners use English ungrammatically.

The teaching and learning EFL at university level belong to intermediate and advanced levels. The learners are adults, as well and they have been learning English, at least, for six years. As it is so, they need theoretical-linguistic explanations and exercises of grammatical features of English in order to build and develop grammatical and communicative competence. Therefore, the study and discussion of grammatical features of English such as active-passive voice, tenses, aspects, and others are the essential parts of EFL teaching programs. Communicative competence cannot be optimally obtained if there is no grammatical competence, then (see further Brown, 2001).

The grammatical features concerning with voice (active and passive voice) in English should be academically and theoretically explained to university students. The understanding on grammatical features of EFL may build grammatical competence and develop communicative competence to support the language skills. Advanced learners need such theoretical information in order that they may come to further analogy on other grammatical specifications.

2. Passive Voice and Scientific Writing

As it has been mentioned above, English is typologically assigned as nominative-accusative language; in this type of language, S = A, ≠ P (subject of intransitive clause is the same with agent of transitive clause, and different from patient of transitive clause). There two main voice systems in accusative language, namely active and passive voice. Grammatically, English has grammatical and semantic categories of deriving active voice into its passive construction. Typologically, a clause in active voice is the underlying clause construction, while that in passive construction is the derived one. Passivization in English involves the grammatical and semantic processes (Shibatani (ed.), 1988).

Generally, passive voice is used to emphasize the agent's condition which is not on agent focus; it is patient oriented construction. Passive constructions follow the passivization rules which involve in the level of morphology, syntax, and semantics. In passivization, the grammatical subject of a passive construction is the patient argument of its underlying construction, the active construction. In this case, grammatical and semantic processes promote the patient to subject relation. The agent in passive construction demotes to oblique relation, and the verb is marked by passive prefix. According to Leech and Svartvik (1979:258 – 259), passive constructions are related to the impersonal style of language use; it is the constructions which do not focus on agent. These types of sentential constructions are commonly used in academic and scientific writings.

There are several reasons why passive (voice) constructions are commonly found and used in academic and/or scientific writings. Firstly, passive constructions are used to avoid the focus on the agent of action. This is important in scientific writing in order to have neutral and objective statements. Secondly, the passive constructions are semantically used to have information focus on object (=patient) of clause. In this case, the focus of information is not on who does/did it, but on the result of the actions. Thirdly, the passive constructions aim at placing topic into core grammatical relation, the subject. By these ways, the information in scientific works is more neutral and objective, not on agent (see Dixon, 1992:299 – 305; Parrott, 2001).

The understanding on passive and active constructions is academically needed by learners of EFL, especially those who are at university level. They have to know how to construct the passive constructions grammatically, how to use them appropriately, and how to

create them variously. In English, there three main types of passives: (i) *common passive (indicated by be + past-participle)*; (ii) *get passive*; and (iii) *causative passive*. The teaching-learning materials on passive voice in formal education in Indonesia are mostly dominated by be + past-participle passive (common passive). Consequently, most of students' passive constructions are in the type, and there is no variation in style. This condition cause stylistic problems of passive constructions in students' writings (Parrott, 2001; Saeed, 1997).

Furthermore, many students of EFL in Indonesia make grammatical problems in constructing passive voice. They frequently forget grammatical rules of passivization in English. They do not have serious attention on grammatical features of English involving in passive constructions. The ungrammatical passive constructions are easily found in their writings, including in the theses of postgraduate students of PPs UNP. In addition to passive voice, English has medio-passive construction as well. The medio-passive construction (or middle-passive construction) is the type voice system in between active and passive. It is semantically passive, but it is grammatically written in active construction. Sometimes, it needs pragmatic views to get the meanings (see Saeed, 1997; Payne, 2002; Hundt, 2007). So that, the followings are semantically passives, although they are grammatically written in active forms.

(1) *The book sells well.*
(2) *Heat-sensitive material molds to your body shape.*
(3) *The turtleneck collar cuddles up warmly beneath the chin.*
(4) *The film script reads like a demented kind of litany…*

This fact causes other grammatical problem for most Indonesian learners. Most Indonesian learners think in the nature of bahasa Indonesia and then they translate it into English. Consequently, they often forget the nature of English grammar. Moreover, the teaching-learning processes of English grammar rarely give enough grammatical information and practical uses of the characteristics of English medio-passive constructions.

C. Data Analysis and Discussion

It was found in the research that there are seven groups of ungrammatical constructions of English passive voice. The following table shows the percentage of the seven groups of ungrammatical constructions of the passive voice found in 40 theses written by postgraduate students of English Department of PPs UNP.

Types of the Grammatical Problems	Amount of Data	Percentage
I. Problem on Tense and Voice (Active for passive)	98	34.4%
II. Problem on Agreement of Subject, Copula, with V3	51	17.9%
III. No subject, copula, and verb agreement	81	28.4%
IV. Problem on using Prepositional Phrase and Adverb	11	3.86%
V. Misuse of passive voice	32	11.23%
VI. Problem of using double *to be*	3	1.05%
VII. Problem on using subject and sentential logics	8	2.8%

Type I is *the problem on tense and voice (active for passive)*. The followings are the examples of the ungrammatical passive constructions.

(5) *… the researcher will do the research…*
(6) *This research will be conducted at …*
(7) *This research has been conducted at ABA BHAS Bukittinggi…*
(8) *Those data would be analyzed…*
(9) *This cycle had been done in three meetings…*
(10) *…the outcome is evaluated and reflected…*
(11) *Finally, the data that have got will be evaluated and reflected by…*

This type of grammatical problems can be said as the elementary and fundamental ones. As thesis is the scientific writing containing research report, the constructions above must be past tense. Most ungrammatical passive constructions found in the students' theses belong to this type; the highest percentage (34.4%) Therefore, (5) – (11) above should be written as in (5a) – (11a).

(5a) *… the research was conducted in …*
(6a) *This research was conducted at …*
(7a) *This research was conducted at ABA BHAS Bukittinggi…*
(8a) *Those data were analyzed …*
(9a) *This cycle was done in three meetings…*
(10a) *…The outcome was evaluated and reflected …*
(11a) *Finally, the data that got were evaluated and reflected by the researcher.*

The second type of the ungrammatical passive constructions is the problem on agreement of subject, copula, with V3 (*past-participle*). Data (12) – (16) are the examples for this type. Revisions like in (12a) – (16a) are suggested to have.

(12) *The data was analyzed by using simple regression technique…*
(13) *It is hope for the next researchers to conduct…*
(14) *It was help the researcher to get…*
(15) *The data of the research has been analyzed…*
(16) *She did not used any techniques was suggested by…*

Revisions like in (12a) – (16a) below are suggested to have.

(12a) *The data were analyzed by using simple regression technique…*
(13a) *It is hope for the next researchers to conduct …*
(14a) *It helped the research to get …*
(15a) *The data of the research were analyzed …*
(16a) *She did not used any techniques suggested by …*

Then, the third type is the problem of no subject, copula, and verb agreement. The followings are the examples.

(17) *The students collected in their own classes, and gave them …*
(18) *Instruments are used in this research, as the followings: …*
(19) *This research did from Wednesday, April, 2 nd until …*
(20) *But when were compared the different of the result…*
(21) *From the figure above showed that …*

The followings revisions are suggested to have instead of (17) – (21) above.

(17a) *The students were collected in their classes, they were given…*
(18a) *Instruments which were used in this research, as the followings:…*
(19a) *This research were conducted from Wednesday, April, 2nd until…*
(20a) *But when it was compared, the difference of the result…*
(21a) *From the figure above, it was showed that …*

Let's see the fourth type of the ungrammatical passive voice constructions as found in learners' theses. This is the problem on using prepositional phrase and adverb. These are the data for this type.

(22) *For vocabulary test was also given by using multiple choice.*
(23) *After the researches was evaluated the task of the students…*
(24) *In this cycle would be presented the class average score of the students…*
(25) *In short that can be concluded that …*
(26) *The graphs above can be seen that …*

The above constructions become grammatical if they are written as the followings.

(22a) *For vocabulary test, it was also given by using multiple choice.*
(23a) *After it, the tasks of the students were evaluated by the researcher.*
(24a) *In this cycle , it was presented the average score of the students in …*
(25a) *In short, it can be concluded that the distinction of words…*

(26a) *The graphs above show that …*

The next type of the ungrammatical passive voice constructions (Type V) is the misuse of passive voice. The examples for this type are as follow:

(27) *Secondly, it is implied that …*
(28) *Each cycle was consisted of plan, action, observation, and reflection…*
(29) *This research was focused on the implementation…*
(30) *The questions were related to the topics…*
(31) *The research was aimed at improving …*

The data (27) – (31) should be grammatically written in active voice, but they are semantically understood as passive one. Therefore, the followings are the revisions for the ungrammatical constructions.

(27a) *Secondly, it implies that…*
(28a) *Each cycle consisted of plan, action, observation, and reflection…*
(29a) *This research focused on the implementation…*
(30a) *The questions related to the topics…*
(31a) *The research aimed at improving …*

The sixth type of ungrammatical passive voice constructions is problem of using double *to be*. The followings are the examples of the problematic constructions found in postgraduate students' theses.

(32) *It was be held by a collaborator…*
(33) *The observation was be done by the researcher …*
(34) *To have content validity, the one which had been only be measured…*

There are only three sentences which have double copula (*to be*) found in the research. Based on the number of sentences, it is not significant enough. The problem is not on the number, but why and how such kind of grammatical problem still appears. It cannot be academically believed; it is more as the '*silly mistake'*, then. The followings are the revisions for (32) – (34).

(32a) *It was held by a collaborator…*
(33a) *The observation was done by the researcher…*
(34a) *To have content validity, the one which had been only measured…*

The last type of ungrammatical passive voice constructions is problem on using subject and sentential logics. These are more on psychological and concentration factors rather than natural or academic ones. See the followings!

(35) *This research was analyzed based on the theory conducted by…*
(36) *The graphs above can be seen that …*
(37) *It means she has it not predicted on her husband's pressure…*
(38) *… but there were still some problems should be improved…*
(39) *Students' low participation had not anticipated well.*
The followings are the possible revisions for the ungrammatical-illogical constructions above.
(35a) *The data of this research were analyzed based on the theory proposed by…*
(36a) *Based on the graph above, it can be seen that …*
(37a) *It means that it has not been predicted based on her husband's pressure…*
(38a) *… but there were still some problems that should be improved…*
(39a) *Students' low participation had not been anticipated well.*

Based on these seven types of ungrammatical passive constructions above, it can be seen that there still grammatical problems on passive (clause) constructions made by the postgraduate students of PPs UNP as they are found in their theses. Theoretically and academically, they should not have the grammatical problems in constructing English passive anymore. At least, there three reasons why they should not write the problematic passive voice constructions in their theses. First, they are postgraduate students, master degree level, and of course they must have had enough knowledge on the English passive constructions. Second, they had followed academic processes and supervisor before they handed their theses. Third, they had learned how to write scientific papers and theses since they were at undergraduate degree. In line with these, they should not have had the elementary problems in constructing passive voice anymore.

However, the facts say differently. There are still elementary and logical problems made by students in writing passive sentences. How did they come up? It can be argued that there are two natural factors which cause the grammatical problems. The factors are: (i) the interference of learners' L1 (first language); and (ii) the inflectional and formal changes of verb and *copula be* following the tenses change. Then, there are also, at least, two academic factors causing the grammatical problems above. They are: (i) less pedagogical attention, grammatical explanation, and communicative exercises on the features of passive voice constructions; and (ii) there is learners' tendency to focus on transferring the content of messages rather than the attention on grammatical features of sentences used.

Although the postgraduate learners have been English for more than nine years, they communicate verbally in their daily life in bahasa Indonesia and in their local languages. As it is known, language interference phenomena cannot be optimally avoided; it is the natural phenomena in learning a foreign language. Typologically, bahasa Indonesia and most local languages in Indonesia are the tenseless languages, while English is a tenseness language. When they write, they naturally think in their L1 and some grammatical features of English are easily forgotten. Practically, they naturally made such kinds of grammatical problems in constructing passive voice.

It is also proved that academic factors caused also the appearance of grammatical problems in passive constructions. It seems that less serious attention on grammatical features in the teaching learning processes of English grammar, lack of communicative exercises, and learners' tendency to focus more on what to communicate rather than how to construct grammatical sentences for that purpose become the academic problems causing the grammatical problems. If all of them are allowed, then the quality of language used, in specific side, and the quality of master degree theses written in English are academically questioned.

D. Concluding Remarks

EFL learning in Indonesia naturally face grammatical problems and difficulties which can be caused by many factors. If the ungrammatical passive constructions are mostly allowed, moreover in master degree theses, this is academic problems for EFL teaching and learning. It is argued again that writing skill and grammatical competence become main criteria for high education. Therefore, to give serious attention on grammar and writing skills are really recommended.

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