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# GRAMMATICAL FEATURES IN THE INTRODUCTION SECTION OF ENGLISH UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

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# **ABSTRACT**

This research aimed to find the grammatical features: (1) the total of tenses (present tense, past tense, and present perfect tense), (2) voice forms identification in the thesis introduction section of English Undergraduate. This research used a quantitative method. The checklist and documentation are used as the instruments. The corpus of this research used 20 introduction sections of the English Undergraduate thesis. The result reveals, first, the students most often used simple present tense with a total of 945; the total of the simple past tense was 306, and the present perfect tense showed the least appearance with a total of 34. Second, the active form most often appears in the introduction section of the students' theses, which happened 1044 times; meanwhile, the total use of passive voice was 243. In conclusion, this research highlights grammatical features that are commonly used in the introduction section of the undergraduate thesis; three tenses include simple present tense, simple past tense, and present perfect tense; voice forms that cover active form and passive form. Furthermore, the use of tense types and voice forms is influenced by the context of the idea expressed and the functions of tenses and voice forms. As a suggestion, undergraduate students are advised to follow standards and trends in grammatical features used in writing the introduction section.

**Keywords**: Grammatical Features, Introduction Section, Undergraduate Thesis

# INTRODUCTION

At the university level, thesis writing is a form of academic writing. Writing a thesis is an obligation that must be done by the student to graduate or to take the last step in receiving a bachelor's degree. Khodadi (2021) stated that the undergraduate program at a university must complete the final research called a thesis. In writing a thesis, the students should consider all language components. In line with this argumentation, Kobrinain (2018) believes that good authors try to avoid using unnecessary words to convey the meaning. In short, the author has to employ proper sentence construction, word choice, tenses, and writing style.

The guidelines on thesis writing provided by each university are sometimes worded differently from each other, but most of them generally include the same required parts for each section of a thesis. Take, for instance, the guidelines for the thesis introduction section, which is provided by the universities. This section should include the study's history, how the issue was formulated, the research question/hypothesis, what the study's purpose and importance are, the limitations of the research, and an overview of the thesis chapter (*English Education Study Program, UNIB*).

Among all the sections in an undergraduate thesis, the introduction section is one of the most difficult sections to write. Similarly, Azadnia (2019) argues that writing an introduction section, even for those who are natural speakers of the language, is difficult. This is so that readers can grasp the research topic and research project, as Swales claimed that writers must present the appropriate amount and type of material in the introductory section. One of the most important pieces is the introduction because it is the portion that most readers pay close attention to after reading the abstract; readers are reluctant to read further if they are not impressed by this portion (Arsyad, 2018). In other words, the introduction section plays a key role in writing and motivating readers to read the whole part of the thesis, and for this reason, the introduction section must be interesting and also convincing.

The opening section becomes a crucial component that clarifies the research problem. The introductions are essential because they are critical in demonstrating the significance and relevance of the research recounted in the thesis to earlier work on the topic. Utami (2018) noted that the writer must take extra care because this is the initial portion of the study or thesis and must pique readers' interest in the subject. Language structure should be taken into consideration when writing the beginning part since it will have an impact on the message the students wish to portray. One of the components is grammatical, and it has to do with how the thesis' opening part is written. As was

already said, grammatical elements are one of the factors that define how well a thesis introduction is written.

Grammatical features have a strong relationship with the introduction chapter. Grammatical features can be defined as a characteristic that defines a text or sentence, such as what grammatical structure is used in that sentence, lexical, semantics, phonology, and other signs or features that shape the existing text linguistically. If the students implement the components of grammatical features, it will produce good quality writing in the introduction section of the thesis. Even though only a few pupils have been shown to have adequate understanding, it can be challenging for them to translate their ideas and knowledge into a written piece. The importance of knowing what the students write to compose good writing. In addition, Gonzalez (2018) stated that grammatical features used by authors in their texts are a reflection of the quality and skills of the authors themselves. In short, good writing is affected by an understanding of grammatical features.

In linguistics, a grammatical feature is a property of items within the grammar of a language. Grammatical form is the aspect of grammar that determines the meaning of a sentence by the unique use of sentence structure, word order, and word inflections. Tense and voice are two crucial grammatical elements in the opening section that have received increased attention from research studies because they shed light on the textual genre. The students should be able to produce their introduction part successfully if they fully comprehend grammatical elements.

Arsyad and Arono (2018) elaborated more relevant information about this opinion in their book, stating that the grammatical construction of simple present tense is often applied in the first move of the introduction section, which is the part that narrates the information background and how the problem emerges. Other than these two moves, the construction of grammatical paste tense often applies.

Many studies have investigated grammatical features; one of them was by Setiawati et al. in 2020 with the title. The findings have shown that all moves are considered. In terms of linguistic realizations, the introductions to the hard sciences showed a stronger use of the passive form, even though the tense usage was more uniform. Another research was done by Somba et al. (2019), entitled "An Analysis of the Grammatical Features and Lexical Features that the Hearing-Impaired.

Learners Use in Writing to Achieve Cohesion". The study confined its investigation to the nature of cohesion in the hearing-impaired learners' English written texts. Students and newcomers to the subject of writing can find this study useful because they can use these traits as a starting point for a list of options that will work well for them when writing.

The previous author mostly focused on the article. There is no study that focuses on the opening portion of undergraduate theses, at least not one that those writers are aware of. Therefore, it makes sense for this study to examine grammatical elements in the opening part of the undergraduate thesis. Hence, the researcher formulates the title of this study as "Grammatical Features in The Introduction Section of English Undergraduate Thesis."

The researcher understands that there were presumably similarities in the type, issue, research methods, and objects used with other scientific works. The researcher tries to make efforts to present unique and different research content. However, the subject of this research is certainly different. The researcher analyzed the introduction section of the English undergraduate thesis. Meanwhile, the previous author mostly focused on the articles. There has been no research conducted by the previous authors regarding the component of the thesis that specifically focuses on the introduction section of an English undergraduate thesis. Therefore, something new from this research is that the research was conducted in the introduction section of the undergraduate thesis written by English students, and the results stated that the use of tenses and voice forms is influenced by the context of the introduction section and basic functions of tenses and voice forms.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

# The Concept of Thesis Writing

Writing is the process of expressing ideas and thoughts using symbols in a readable format. The function of writing is to convey a specific purpose and give a clear message to the reader. Ibna (2018) noted that writing is an expression that involves the construction of text. Writing is two-way communication between the writer and the reader. There are many kinds of writing, such as formal and informal writing. At the university level, writing a thesis is a type of formal writing. Writing a thesis is a process that should be done by students at the university level to complete the grade. Tiwari (2019) stated that a thesis is a type of science writing that is done as the final task of a student used to achieve a certain degree at the university level. Writing a thesis uses a scientific method and in the form of written papers. It means that a thesis is a final project made by using the method of thinking, theory as supporting, and well structured.

# The Concept of Introduction Section

An undergraduate thesis generally consists of five chapters, one of the chapters which is the introduction section. The introduction portion of the thesis is the first section and provides background information on the subject. The introduction section

consists of background, statement problem, research question, research objective, limitation, and key terms. The introduction section includes some elements. First, provide the research question to show the necessity and importance of the research. Second, present the reason for the research and indicate why it is worth doing. Third, the first section of the thesis is the introductory section, which provides a background on the subject. Fourth, state the hypothesis or theory and set the limitation of the research to provide a clear focus. The last is to define key terms.

The students write the introduction section by using their thinking and based on the facts. The introduction section discusses preliminary data and supporting theory. A general summary of the issue opens the introduction section. It means that the introduction section helps students to focus on how to start and what they specifically need to write. The introduction section plays a role in understanding background information. The introduction section should be arresting and explain to the readers why the students took the research. Utami (2018) noted that this section serves as the studies or the thesis's opening section; the writer has to give special care because it needs to make readers interested in the topic. In essence, this section should be brief and clear about the specific purpose. The purpose of the introduction section is to give the necessary background for the research.

# **Grammatical Features of Introduction Section**

In the introduction section, two grammatical features include tenses and voice forms (Setiawan, 2020). Also, Arsyad and Arono (2018) provided more pertinent information regarding this viewpoint in their book, indicating that the simple present tense grammar structure is frequently used in the initial move, which is the section that describes the background information and how an issue arises. The fifth move, which describes the conclusion, is also likely to use the simple present tense. The grammatical past tense construction is frequently used, aside from these two changes.

# a. tense

A verb's tense indicates the moment at which something occurred or will occur. Tense is the change of form in a verb to express the time of an action. Azar (2019) stated that the tense is a form of the verb used to indicate time. Concerning the twelve tenses in English, Paltridge, and Starfield (2020) state that there are only three tenses that are commonly used, namely simple present tense, simple past tense, and present perfect tense.

#### **b.** Voice Forms

The phrase "voice form" describes the way a verb is conjugated to show whether a grammatical subject is doing the action or receiving it. The subject is given the action in the passive voice. In academic writing, it is typically preferred to couple an active verb with a subject that specifically identifies the person or object performing the activity. Verbs in the passive voice lack the strength and force that active voice verbs and forms of the verb "be" have. Azar (2019) stated that the English language has two voices such as active and passive.

#### RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed the quantitative approach since the researcher used numbers to examine the data and provide theoretical justifications for it. This research has two sections. The purpose of collecting quantitative data in the first step was to count the total number of tenses (present tense, past tense, and present perfect tense). The second step was used to identify voice forms that were counted as the total of types of voice forms.

# **Corpus of the Research**

The choice of 20 thesis introductions might be interpreted as an indication of the grammatical conventions used by the authors in composing their introduction part. The theses were produced in 2021 and chosen using a random sample process. This study used the lottery method; each member of the corpus is given a number, and then after that, the number is chosen randomly. This random selection can use methods such as lotteries. The randomly selected numbers represent the selected members of the population. There were 20 introduction sections of undergraduate theses selected as the corpus of this research.

# **Research Instrument**

Documentation was a tool in this investigation. Documentation is an instrument to get information in the form of written sources or documentaries. The information was in the student's thesis' opening chapter. The information examined the grammatical elements. There are two subcategories of grammatical features, namely types of tenses and voice forms. First, grammatical accuracy counts the total of tenses (present tense, past tense, and present perfect tense). In this section, the researcher used the table to classify the total of tenses into their classification. Second, the researcher used the table to classify the total types of voice forms.

The data was gathered using a checklist as the tool. Using a checklist, commonly referred to as a tick list or chart, the researcher can keep track of the behaviors or abilities being used by checking off signs as they are noticed. After documenting the students' thesis writing, the researcher used a checklist to identify the grammatical traits. This checklist allows you to indicate if each item is present, absent, or occurs frequently.

# **Technique of Analyzing Data**

There are three stages as follow as:

- 1. In the opening part, it stated what kind of tenses were being used. Simple present, simple past, and present perfect tenses are all covered by this identification technique. The tense of the main clause will be marked if a sentence contains two clauses. All tense types are coded using this technique. As soon as the marking process was complete, all of these identity data were sent to the checklist instrument (see appendix 2. Voice forms (utilized passive voice or utilized active voice) a voice develops. When a sentence has two clauses, the main clause's voice will be marked. As soon as the marking process was complete, all of these identity data were sent to the checklist instrument.
- 3. The process of explaining and giving meaning to the results of quantitative data that has been gathered is called interpretation. The summary of quantitative interpretation is to provide just theoretical and literary justifications.

#### **FINDING**

# **Type of Tenses**

This study examined three tenses: the simple present tense, past tense, and present perfect tense. Amongst these three tenses, findings showed that the use of the simple present tense dominated tense usage in the introduction section. This can be seen in Table 1 below:

	1. ) Accumulation of Type of Tenses				
		<b>Type of Tenses</b>		Total	
	Present Tense	Past Tense	Present Perfect		
			Tense		
Total	945	306	34	1285	

Table 1 shows that there are some types of tense found in the introduction section of undergraduate theses; they are simple present tense, past tense, and present perfect tense. The type of tenses of simple present tense dominated almost all sentences in the introduction section of the students' theses, which happened 945 times. The simple past tense is used less frequently than the simple present, with a total of 306 times. Unlike the present, perfect tense showed the least appearance, which this finding indicated that they were rarely used.

# a. Simple Present Tense

These examples show the most common tenses that were found in sentences. First, the conclusion on the use of the Simple Present Tense, as stated in Thesis 2's

introduction part with the title "Undergraduate Students' Difficulties in Translating an Editorial of The Jakarta Post," as seen below:

Example of the Simple Present Tense:

"Since English **is** a foreign language that the students of the English Education Program learn, mastering translation is crucial. When learning English as a second language, students increasingly depend on translation services."

(Paragraph 3, page 1)

The word "is" from the previous sentence, which is utilized in the first sentence, is to be 1. In the context of the Simple Present, it is to be. The second sentence's verb one and the word "becomes" are both present. In the context of the simple present, it is a verb. As a result, the simple present tense was used to define these statements.

# **b.** Simple Past Tense

Secondly, the simple past tense is found in the introduction section of Thesis 10 with the title "Self-Mention Employed by Indonesia and International Writers in Discussion Section of Journal Articles Published in Reputable English Journals." Example of the Past tense:

The goal of this study <u>was</u> to explain how self-mentions are used in research articles that are published in prominent English-language publications. The study's focus was on two characteristics of self-mentions.." (Paragraph 2, Page 5)

In the first sentence, the word "was," which is used in the sentence above, is to be 2.

In the second sentence, the word "became" is verb 2. They are to be, and verbs are used to express past events.

#### c. Present Perfect Tense

The present perfect tense, which is the last one, is hardly frequently used. The present perfect tense is not used in various theses. The finding of The Present Perfect Tense usage is indicated in the introduction section of Thesis 7 and Thesis 14.

Example of The Present perfect Tense:

"Many studies <u>have investigated</u> Higher Order thinking Skill in scoop of educational research" (Thesis 14, Page 2)

"In order to make successful English teaching, the teachers <u>have got</u> challenging tasks to motivate the students." (Thesis 7, Page 3)

In both examples, word "have investigated and have got" are auxiliary and verb 3. They are verbs used in the present perfect context. Therefore, both examples are defined using present perfect tense.

# **Voice Forms**

There are two voice forms that this study analyzed which are: active voice and passive voice. Amongst these two voice forms, findings showed that the active voice dominated form usage in the introduction section. This can be seen in Table 2 below:

Table 2) Accumulation of Voice Forms Identification

	Voice Forms		
	Active Voice	Passive Voice	
Total	1044	243	

Table 2 shows that there were two forms of voice found in the introduction section, especially in students' undergraduate theses, which are active form and passive form. The active form most often appears in the introduction section of the students' theses, which happened 1044 times. In contrast, the divergence between the use of active voice and passive voice was seen in the total number of voice forms.

The findings were shown two voice forms indicated in thesis different in the introduction section. Firstly, passive voice findings indicated from thesis 3 and thesis 9.

Example of passive voice usage in the past tense:

"Theoretically, this research <u>was expected</u> to help in identifying English Education students' pronunciation in inert letters." (Thesis 3, page 6)

Example of passive voice usage in the present tense:

"This term of pronunciation <u>is learned</u> in one of the subjects in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Bengkulu." (Thesis 3, Page 2)

Example of passive voice usage in the present perfect tense:

"Slang words <u>have also been coined</u> by people responsible for shaping history authors, poets, artists, musicians, soldiers and protesters who continue to impact us today." (Thesis 9, Page 3)

In the first example, the word "was expected" is the verb: "was" is to be of past tense, and "expected" is verb 3. In the second example, word "is learned" is the verb: "is" is to be of present tense, and "learned" is verb 3. In the last example, word "have been coined" is the verb: "have been" auxiliary and to be, "coined" is verb 3.

# **DISCUSSION**

# **Type of Tenses**

Twenty introductions of undergraduate theses, out of total of 954 sentences used simple present tense. Eight introduction sections used the simple present tense of more than 50 sentences. Unlike the use of the simple past tense, which is less than the simple present, with a total of 306 sentences, seven theses used the simple present less than ten sentences. Likewise, not all introduction sections used present perfect tense, as

shown by the fact that the total is only 34 sentences. Seven introduction sections did not use the perfect tense. At the same time, the other theses used the present perfect tense in less than five sentences. It showed that present perfect tense is the least total used in the introduction section of undergraduate theses.

In the introduction section, the present tense is used when previous results support the author's claim or when the author wants to mention previous results. The students tend to use the present tense in reporting the suggestions, conclusions, or theories presented in previous research. The present tense is used when students explain the objective of the research and fill out identified niches or gaps. In addition, in writing the introduction section, one of the components is to describe sub-problems to be addressed by the research based on the facts of the research.

The second type of tense was simple past tense. The simple past tense was frequently used in the introduction section of the undergraduate thesis. The function of simple past tense is to indicate that an activity or situation began and ended at a particular time in the past. One of the components of writing the introduction section is to mention some previous studies. Simple past tense is used to support the author's work or to claim generality about the past literature. The researcher found there are many words "stated that, argued that, noted that, mentioned, and said" in the introduction section. Those words are the simple past tense used to support the author's claim context. Besides, a simple past is used to mention some previous studies to support the research. The students also used simple past tense to explain the limitations of the research. These contexts influence the use of simple past tense.

The last type was present perfect tense. The present perfect tense is used to talk about actions or events that happened at some unspecified time before now and that have some effect or influence on the present. It is used to make it clear that one event happened before another in the past. This type is rarely used in the introduction section of an undergraduate thesis. Present perfect tense is used to refer to previous research that is still valid. The researcher only found that the present perfect tense is used by the students to highlight the topic and previous research. As a result, students rarely used the present perfect tense in the introduction section of their thesis, not even using it at all.

This was in line with Setiawati et al. (2020) in their research, who found that the findings showed that simple present tense was dominantly used in the introduction written by authors from soft and hard sciences. The writers tend to use the present tense in reporting the suggestions, conclusions, or theories presented in previous research, even though the tense used in the preceding verbs was in the past tense.

Reasons to use most two tenses, either the simple Present tense or past tense, in each rhetorical move by Indonesian authors might be affected by such as limited grammatical understanding (Hidayatullah et al., 2018), little theories, lack of knowledge of the background and average English proficiency. Besides, the Indonesian language does not have grammatical tenses (Arsyad & Arono, 2018).

Therefore, Indonesian authors tend to use both tenses interchangeably. Moreover, simplicity might be another rationale due to the absence of a standard or rule that requires and or forbids them from using particular tenses. As a result, the option to use either Present tense or Past tense is considerably seen as a matter of preference.

# **Voice Forms**

The second question was about the voice forms in the introduction section of undergraduate theses. The domination of active voice was depicted through the use in the introduction section. It can be seen from the total of active voices found in the students' introduction section of these 1044. Using active voice often improves clarity, while passive voice can help avoid unnecessary repetition. Since active voice constructions are usually stronger, clearer, more direct, and often more concise than their passive voice counterparts, most students favor the active voice in writing the introduction section.

Sentences in active voice are also more concise than those in passive voice because fewer words are required to express action in active voice than in passive. In the introduction section, the students mostly used active voice to explain the point of view or the idea about their argument of the research in the explanation by expert theories, the general explanation, the explanation of the purpose of the research, and the explanation of support claim which aims to support the argument to be stronger and more trusted. Active voice can help ensure clarity by making it clear to the reader who is taking action in the sentence.

In passive voice, the person or thing acted on comes first, and the actor is added at the end, introduced with the preposition "by." The passive form of the verb is signaled by the form of "to be ."The passive voice is used when the writer wants to state what the subject is doing, while the active voice is used when the writer wants to state what happened to the subject. It means that the passive voice is more emphasized in the action. Based on the findings, the students still used passive voice.

It showed the total use of passive voice was 243. The passive voice is used when the object or action itself is more important than the agent acting. The use of passive voice in academic writing when the performer is unimportant, obvious, or unknown. Passive voice is also preferred when the process or action is more important than who did it.

In the introduction section, passive voice is used to highlight previous studies and findings. Passive voice is used to highlight the results of previous research without emphasizing the role of the researcher. The passive voice aims to make the content of writing idea-oriented. In contrast, the use of active sentences is author-oriented. In the passive voice, the disclosure of an event is highlighted more than the doer. The researcher found the word "was/is conducted" was used frequently in the introduction section. Passive voice was rarely used in the introduction section of the undergraduate thesis. Generally, writing texts in the active voice is considered to be easier to understand than in the passive voice, and the passive voice is frequently used to depersonalize information.

The findings of this current study are similar to the findings of the previous study conducted by Sarfiti and Dayati (2021). The research found that active voice was used by nine lecturers with a frequency of 31%, and passive voice was used by two lecturers with a frequency of 7%. This means that active voice is most often used in the introduction section. In addition, Guan (2020) found in their research that grammatical features of the introduction of Indonesian language research articles, especially in the field of law, are dominated by active sentences.

Active voice and passive voice are components in the grammatical features used to understand and analyze the introduction section. It is passive voice, which is still used to some extent. This finding was also supported by Setiawati et al. (2020), who also found active voice was more frequently used than passive voice. Malmir et al. (2019) argue that passive voice is used to objectify information and to sound more academic and professional. Eventually, this research indicated that the writers in the introduction section predominantly used active voice.

#### **CONCLUSION**

This research aimed to find out the grammatical features found in the introduction section of the undergraduate thesis written by the English education study program students. There were some types of grammatical features found in the theses of undergraduate students, such as tenses (simple present tense, simple past tense, present perfect tense) and voice forms (active and passive forms). From those types, it was found that simple present tenses mostly appeared in the introduction section of the students' theses. Then, it is followed by simple past tense and present perfect tense.

In addition, there were voice forms in the introduction section of the undergraduate thesis made by the English education study program, such as active and passive forms. Active voice is properly ideal in almost the introduction section, whereas passive voice is better suited. The frequency of occurrence of the most

frequently used type of tenses and voice forms in the introduction section of the undergraduate thesis is related to the context and the basic functions of each tense and voice form.

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