

***“An Analysis of First Year English Department Students’ Ability in Identifying  
English Articles (A, An, and The)”***

**THESIS**

*Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements to obtain strata one (S1)  
degree*



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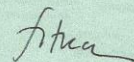
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AN ANALYSIS OF FIRST YEAR ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS'  
ABILITY IN IDENTIFYING ENGLISH ARTICLES (A, AN AND THE)

Padang, April 2016

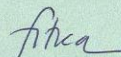
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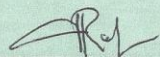
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
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## ABSTRAK

Bestari, Trihardika. 2016. **“An Analysis of First Year English Department Students’ Ability in Identifying English Article (A, An and The).** *Skripsi*. Padang: Jurusan Bahasa Inggris. Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni. Universitas Negeri Padang.

Penelitian ini mengkaji kemampuan mahasiswa dalam mengidentifikasi penggunaan *articles* dalam Bahasa Inggris. Adapun populasi dalam penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa Bahasa Inggris tahun akademik 2015 di Universitas Negeri Padang dan subjek penelitian dipilih dengan menggunakan metode *simple random sampling*. Masalah yang diangkat dalam penelitian ini adalah bagaimana tingkat kemampuan mahasiswa dalam mengidentifikasi *articles* dan apa saja penyebab-penyebab kesulitan yang dihadapi mahasiswa dalam menggunakan *articles*. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui tingkat kemampuan mahasiswa dalam mengidentifikasi penggunaan *articles* serta penyebab-penyebab kesulitan yang dihadapi dalam menggunakan *articles*. Adapun instrumen yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah test dan kuisioner. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa memiliki tingkat kemampuan mengidentifikasi penggunaan *articles* yang berada di bawah rata-rata dengan skor rata-rata 47.1. Berdasarkan kuisioner yang dilakukan oleh mahasiswa diketahui bahwa ada beberapa penyebab rendahnya tingkat kemampuan mengidentifikasi penggunaan *articles*. Faktor-faktor penyebab itu diantaranya tidak terbiasanya mahasiswa dengan sktruktur *articles* yang tidak ada didalam Bahasa Indonesia, sulitnya memahami tata bahasa didalam Bahasa Inggris dan penggunaan *articles* yang kadang serupa. Berdasarkan hal diatas, dapat disimpulkan bahwa mahasiswa Bahasa Inggris UNP memiliki tingkat identifikasi penggunaan *articles* yang rendah. Sedangkan tidak terbiasa dengan struktur *articles*, sulitnya memahami tata bahasa didalam Bahasa Inggris dan penggunaan *articles* yang kadang serupa menjadi kesulitan-kesulitan penyebab rendahnya tingkat kemampuan mahasiswa Bahasa Inggris UNP dalam menggunakan *articles*.

Kata Kunci: *articles*, penyebab-penyebab kesulitan penggunaan *articles*

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **A. Background of the Problem**

English is an international language because most countries around the world know and use it as a tool of communication. Broadly, learning English deals with four skills. They are listening, speaking, reading and writing. All those skills are closely related to each other. It is also deals with linguistics aspects like vocabulary and grammar.

Grammar is an essential part in learning English. Without understanding grammar, both spoken and written communication are not likely to be done well. Grammar is sometimes defined as the way words are put together to make a correct sentence. Grammar is also called as structure and has an important role and it cannot be separated since it belongs to the competence of English that should be learned by students to increase their ability in English. Ur (2000:75) says that grammar is set of rules that define how words (or part of words) are combined or changed to form acceptable units of meaning within a language. This means that grammar is the core of the language. If the learners have mastered the grammar of a language, it will their basic to master the language skills such as speaking, listening, reading and writing.

In grammar there is a term called the part of speech. Part of speech is usually defined as the word classes, however, not every word belongs to only one class. In different context and sentence, one word can be more than one

class. The part of speech can be divided into two major, commonly called open classes and closed classes. The open classes are verb, noun, adjective and adverb. The closed classes are the rest including preposition, determinative, coordinator and subordinator. The open classes also have a very large membership, for example we shall sub-classify noun as common nouns, proper nouns or pronouns. Nouns usually occupy the head position in the structure of noun phrase and as pre-head dependent determinatives like *the*, *a*, and *an*. *The*, *a* and *an* are probably the most important member of determiners and also called as articles.

Accuracy in using articles is required to make correct sentences, but since errors in the use of articles generally do not affect communication, many students may feel that the effort involved in learning the articles system correctly is not proportionate to the benefits accrued. However, in academic writing, using correct articles in sentences become an indication not only of mastery of the language but of exactness in thought and expression.

Selection of articles is one of the most difficult areas of English grammar for many English as foreign language students. Miller (2005:80) stated:

In almost any piece of writing submitted by a non-native speaker of English, three things will often indicate that the writer is working in a second language: the choice of tense and aspect, the subject and verb agreements, and the use of articles (*the*, *a*, *an*).

Based on Miller, it can be said that errors in using articles are one of the highly noticeable to native speakers. That is why the correct selection in using articles is important for students, especially in academic writing. This fact is



supported by Sinclair (1991, in Master, 2002, p.332) who lists article *the* as the most frequent word and article *a* as the fifth most frequent. This frequency means that these two words have a wide-ranging effect on speech styles and that proficiency in this system will provide non-native speakers with a perceptibly increased level of accuracy.

However, articles sometimes use almost randomly by the students. Some students say that articles are so difficult to acquire that no rules can guarantee the use of an article, so in order to make correct selection, students must know the grammatical type of the noun and the meaning of the noun. Selection of the correct article is one of the ways that give a noun the exact meaning that students want it to have.

One of the key factors in teaching articles is the notion of countability. In English, nouns may be divided into the categories of countable and uncountable noun. Countable nouns are those which may take a plural form while uncountable nouns cannot be made plural. It is important for students to realize that countability is a grammatical category and not a practical one. That means a word can be countable and uncountable based on its meaning. *Money*, for example, is countable when it is in a wallet but is not usually countable as a noun because *moneys* can be found in a business sense. Identifying countability is problematic for students. They sometimes find it difficult to determine how native speakers of English regard nouns that may be countable or uncountable according to context.

The differences of English language pattern with students' native language also make students confused and cannot use articles correctly. In English, the indefinite articles *a* and *an* are used with a singular countable noun, for examples, *she is a teacher* or *this is an engineer*. On the contrary, Indonesian language system does not have articles. Consequently, Indonesian students tend to drop *a* or *an* where they are necessary, for examples *she is teacher* or *this is engineer*. Further to this point, Indonesian students also tend to generically use the plural definite article as in example *I like the oranges* which is the incorrect selection of the articles.

Another example is the use of *a* and *an* in a noun which begins with a consonant but sounds like vowel. The word '*hour*', for example, start with a consonant 'h' but in speaking the letter 'h' is omitted so the word is pronounced as '*our*'. Negatively, in Indonesian language a word is pronounce just like how it write, it makes students often use article *a* before the word *hour*. They write it as '*a hour*' while the right one is '*an hour*'.

Students also have problems in using articles because they cannot understand the noun that goes with the articles. For example articles that are used with proper noun. Article *the* cannot be used with a proper noun if the proper name comes first such as in the word *Idaho State University*. Some students sometimes still use article and write it as *The Idaho State University*. So, although in Indonesia articles have been studied since junior high school, some senior high school students and even college students have difficulties to master it.

The difficulties may also be faced by the students in using English article. For example in using article sometimes the use of definite and indefinite article is similar. In some situation, the use of either a definite or an indefinite article may be possible so students get confused to determine the article. For example in a sentence '*A table is a useful article of furniture*' and '*the table is a useful article of furniture*' is hard to differentiate by students because both of the articles feel right in the sentence when the correct one is both of the sentences explain something different that is why the article use in the sentences also different. The first sentence described as 'a typical representative example' and the second describe as 'universal and general'.

The indefinite article *a* or *an* is slightly less problematic for most students since its use is restricted to singular, countable nouns but when it comes to definite article, students faced difficulty to use it. For the students, definiteness can simply be defined as presumed known to the listener and it make students may initially overuse the definite article *the*. Liu and Gleason (2002:5) state that the use of *the* may be generic or non-generic, and suggest that the non-generic uses are the most difficult for language learners, particularly in relation to what they term "cultural use". So, the problem for ESL students lies in identifying whether to use definite and indefinite articles based on the sense of the noun.

Based on the problems above, the writer is interested in conducting a research about the ability of first year students of English Department in identifying articles. In English Department of UNP, articles are taught in

grammar. In this research the researcher takes the first year students because they have learnt about the use of articles before. So, this research is going to see how well the students understand the use of article before they learn more about it in the higher level.

### **B. Identification of the Problem**

Based on background of the problem that is stated above, it can be identified that the students have difficulties in using articles. These difficulties are; first, the students do not really understand about articles and how to use them because the structure of English language is different with Indonesian language. It is because in Indonesian language there is no term like articles so students do not familiar with the articles and how to use them. Students sometimes fail to use an article when one is required or use article when there should be none. Second, the students have lack skills in understanding the grammar especially noun that use with articles. The variability of some nouns that sometimes can be countable or uncountable noun and the way native speakers pronounce a word constitutes a difficulty for students to understand. A difficulty may also face by the students in using English article. Third, the use of definite and indefinite article is similar. In some situation, the use of either a definite or an indefinite article may be possible so students get confuse to determine the article.

### **C. Limitation of the Problem**

It was stated previously that there are several problems which are faced by students in using articles. This study of articles is limited to explore students' understanding in identifying it in written form of English language because in Indonesia, English language is a compulsory subject. This study is extended to know the students' ability in identifying English articles and the difficulties encountered by the students in learning articles.

### **D. Formulation of the Problem**

The problem of this research is formulated in this following question: "How is the students' ability in identifying English articles and the causes of difficulties in using them?"

### **E. Research Questions**

The research questions are:

1. How is the first year English Department students' ability in identifying English articles?
2. What are the causes of difficulties that the students face in using English articles?

### **F. Purpose of the Research**

Related to the research questions stated previously, the purposes of this research were to:



1. To analyze first year English Department students' ability in identifying English articles.
2. To explain the causes of difficulties that the students face in learning English articles.

### **G. Significance of the Research**

Theoretically, it is hoped that the research findings can enrich the knowledge related to the students' ability in English grammar. This research is supposed to give contribution and important information about the students' ability in using articles. This information can be useful for both the teachers and students to know about the students' ability also the factors that can influence that ability. Students can be more aware about their ability and know some common mistakes caused by the use of articles. Meanwhile, the teachers can help the students to have better understanding about using articles by recognizing the factors that influence students' ability. Finally, it is also expected that the result can be useful information for the next researcher or writer who conducts further research about using articles.

### **H. Definition of Key Term**

1. Grammar : the scientific study of the form and arrangement of words, phrases and sentences.
2. Articles : words that is used with noun to indicate the type of reference being made by the noun.