

TENSES IN WRITING AN ENGLISH ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Some people say that writing an English abstract is difficult because they have to pay attention to the use of English grammar. Moreover, writing an English abstract has to use correct tenses. Each component of the abstract should use different tenses. The study aimed to describe the tenses used in the English abstract of the articles published in the online journal of Universitas Bhamada Slawi and analyze the errors in tense. The study was qualitative research with a descriptive method. The population was 221 documents; those were checked by inclusion and exclusion criteria resulting in 101 abstracts from the two journals. The obtained data were analyzed by data triangulation. Based on the data analysis, it described two types the use of tenses in the English abstract; simple present tense for all (57 abstracts) and a combination of simple present and past tense (44 abstracts). Also, there were some sentences categorized by errors in tenses. In conclusion, two tenses are used to arrange an English abstract; simple present tense for "background" and "conclusion", and past tense for arranging "purpose", "method", and "result". To avoid more errors in tenses, the journal should enclose a file including the use of exact tenses in each part of the abstract.

Keywords: Analysis, Tenses, Abstract

Abstrak

Beberapa orang menganggap bahwa menulis abstrak dalam bahasa Inggris tidak mudah karena mereka harus menguasai grammar bahasa Inggris. Selain itu, abstrak berbahasa Inggris juga harus memperhatikan penggunaan tenses. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan tenses yang digunakan dalam abstrak berbahasa Inggris yang diterbitkan di jurnal online Universitas Bhamada Slawi dan menganalisis kesalahan-kesalahan dalam penggunaan tenses. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif menggunakan metode deskriptif. Populasi dalam penelitian ini adalah 221 dokumen yang selanjutnya difilter sesuai dengan kriteria inklusi dan eksklusi sehingga menghasilkan 101 abstrak. Data yang diperoleh kemudian dianalisis dengan teknik triangulasi. Hasil analisis data tersebut menyatakan bahwa terdapat dua jenis penggunaan tenses dalam abstrak berbahasa Inggris; simple present tense (57 abstrak) dan kombinasi antara simple present dan past tense (44 abstrak). Beberapa kalimat juga teridentifikasi dalam kesalahan penggunaan tenses. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian, dapat disimpulkan bahwa terdapat dua jenis tenses yang digunakan dalam penulisan abstrak berbahasa Inggris; simple present tense untuk penulisan "latar belakang" dan "kesimpulan", dan simple past tense untuk "tujuan", "metode", dan "hasil". Untuk meminimalisir kesalahan-kesalahan dalam penggunaan tenses, akan lebih baik jika tiap jurnal melampirkan file tentang penggunaan tenses dalam tiap komponen abstrak.

Kata kunci: Analisis, Tenses, Abstrak

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INTRODUCTION

Abstract is one of the most important things in a scientific writing and also plays a role to attract the readers' attention (Arono & Arsyad, 2020; Kusumawati & Sugiansi, 2020; Sudipa, 2012). The abstract can be called as a summary of a full article consisted of 150 up to 300 words (Kholili, 2022). A good abstract makes the readers to know more about the research. On the other hand, abstract is also called as a miniature of the research because it consists of background, purpose, method, result, and conclusion which is written in a concise and brief paragraph (Chalak & Norouzi, 2013; Fitria, 2021; Hyland, 2004).

Along with times, scientific research abstracts have made written in two languages; bahasa Indonesia and English. Although a full article is written in bahasa Indonesia, one of the requirements to publish the article in national journal like *Jurnal Ilmu dan Teknologi Kesehatan (JITK)* and *Jurnal Abdimas Bhakti Indonesia (JABI)* is abstract written in bahasa Indonesia and English. It has an big effort to arrange it. People who are not used to write English sentences in English will experience difficulty in decide a correct verb or tense. They have to know the knowledge of writing the abstracts including the pattern used in the abstracts (Kholili, 2022). It is usually called by grammar. One of the main problems faced by the learners is mastering grammar. It is defined as words form of the language itself and creating the combination in phrase, clause, and sentence which pay attention to the meaning and function (Crystal, 2008; Fitria, 2021; Nisa', 2017; Young, 2013).

Tenses in English is related to the use of verb and adverb of time. An activity done in different time will use different tenses. It also applies in writing an English abstract. Another focus of the analysis of the abstracts is the realizations of the tenses used. A study by Salager-Meyer (Nurhayati,

2017) reported that from 84 medical abstracts had different verb tenses based on the functions like the past tense is used in purpose, method, result, and case presentation; while the present tense is prevalent in conclusion, recommendation, and data synthesis. However, in fact, the tense usage in abstracts is quite complicated as mentioned by (Swales, 2004) that even though the introduction and conclusion are often in the present tense, there seems to be considerable disciplinary and individual tense differences in sentences dealing with result. Magnum in his article adds that it's not always easy to decide which tense to use in arranging an abstract (Magnum, 2021). For example, if the research was performed in the past, some aspects need to be referred to using the present tense. Joshi who wrote an article about "using past and present tenses in research writing" conveyed that although English has a complex system of tenses, simple present and simple past tense, along with the present perfect and past perfect, are the most often used tenses in research articles (Joshi, 2013). The followings are some tenses commonly used in English abstracts (Joshi, 2013; Kholili, 2022; Magnum, 2021; Nurhayati, 2017):

a. Simple present tense

It is used to state what is generally true, fact, unlikely to change, and indicate research results or the implications of the research findings. The researcher should discuss the implications of the study in the present tense, although the research was conducted in the past. Related to the abstract, simple present tense is used to write "background/introduction" and "conclusion", yet, some people believes that simple present tense is also applied to state the purpose of the research; it depends on the the journal's guidelines.

b. Simple past tense

It is to describe specific actions or events that occurred in the past and that are not being linked to the present in the same sentence. In writing the abstracts, this

tense can be described “purpose”, “methodology”, and “result”.

c. Present perfect tense

It talks about a past event that is linked to the present, trends, or about events that have ended or happened recently or still continuing. In writing the English abstract, the present perfect is used to claim generality about past literature. It can be in “background”.

d. Past perfect tense

It describes two related past events that occurred at different times in the past and claims non-generality about past literature in “background”.

Based on the explanation, the researcher has been interested in finding out what types of tenses used in English abstract of journals published by Universitas Bhamada Slawi and describing some errors in tenses.

METHOD

The research was a qualitative study using descriptive method. It used human instrument as data source that had function to determine focus of the research, choose data source, conduct data collection, check the data quality, analyze the data, and draw the conclusion based on the findings (Soekidjo, 2012). There are five kinds of qualitative data such as physical objects, still images, sounds, moving images: video, and texts (Bernard et al., 2017). In line with that, the data source in this research was texts about English abstract obtained by downloading the documents from the website of *Jurnal Ilmu dan Teknologi Kesehatan* (JITK) and *Jurnal Abdimas Bhakti Indonesia* (JABI). The population was 221 abstracts, however, 101 abstracts were research sample based on criteria of inclusion, the research subject can represent the sample that fulfill the requirements, and exclusion, the subject cannot be the research sample because of having no requirements (Moleong, 2018). The inclusion criteria of

this research included (1) the articles published on the online journal of Universitas Bhamada Slawi; (2) the research articles with English abstract; (3) the community service articles having English abstract. While, the exclusion criteria was that the articles had English abstract published between 2019 – 2022.

The validity test used triangulation technique to compare the obtained data than sources or other criteria (Sugiyono, 2016). It means that the data of the research were checked by some theories related to tenses used in writing an English abstract. Then, the qualitative data were analyzed in three steps; data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Sugiyono, 2016). In data reduction, the researcher provide code in each English abstract. The coding was performed to keep the data tested objectively. After that, the researcher presented the data in the form of chart. The last, for drawing conclusion, the researcher concluded the findings and compared to the applied theory.

RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Research Finding

After analyzing the data, it found two types of the use of tenses in writing an English abstract. Those were simple present tense and combination of simple present and simple past tense. It could be presented in the following chart.

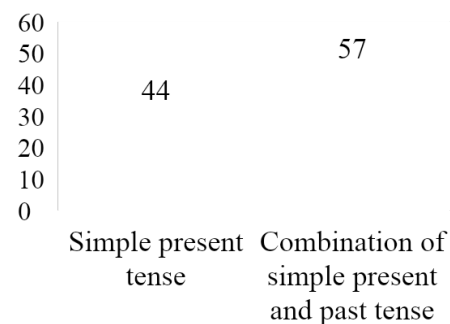


Chart 1. Type of Tenses Used in English Abstract

As the chart above, it can be explained that there were 44 (43.56%) documents of English abstracts using simple present tense meaning that all components of abstract were written by using present tense and 57 (56.44%) files applying the combination of simple present and past tense.

Besides, the researcher conducted error analysis on the English abstracts. The error analysis was focused on the use of simple present tense and simple past tense.

1. Describing past event

As explained before, there are three components of abstract that have to use past tense. Those are purpose, method, and result. In "purpose" component, there were 48 abstracts which did not apply past tense; while 63 abstracts having errors in making the sentences in "method" component, and there were 58 abstracts using present tense to convey the result. However, in this part, the researcher could not mention all the errors, just some sentences were written and discussed.

- (1) AR22-13-1-04, AR21-12-1-06,
AP21-02-2-09, AP21-02-1-08,
AP21-02-1-11, AP20-01-2-05,
AP20-01-2-09, AP20-01-2-10,
AP20-01-1-01, AP20-01-1-03,
AP20-01-1-05

Incorrect: *The general objective of this study **is** to analyze*

Correct: *The general objective of this study **was** to analyze*

- (2) AR22-13-1-09, AR21-12-2-05,
AR21-12-2-06, AR21-12-1-07,
AR20-11-2-02, AP22-03-1-07,
AP21-02-2-07, AP21-02-2-08,
AP21-02-1-01, AP20-01-2-08

Incorrect: *This research **aims** to determine*

Correct: *This research **aimed** to determine*

- (3) AR22-13-1-03, AR22-13-1-09,
AR20-11-2-05, AR20-11-2-09,
AR20-11-1-05

Incorrect: *The research **is** an analytic observational conducted using*

Correct: *The research **was** an analytic observational conducted using*

- (4) AR21-12-2-04, AR22-13-1-12,
AR21-12-2-05, AR21-12-2-09,
AR21-12-2-10, AR21-1-07,
AR21-12-1-10, AR20-11-1-01,
AR20-11-1-06

Incorrect: *The study **uses***

Correct: *The study **used***

- (5) AR21-12-1-03, AR21-12-1-09,
AR20-11-2-04, AR20-11-1-03,
AR20-11-1-05

Incorrect: *The study **using** simple random sampling.*

Correct: *The study **used** simple random sampling.*

- (6) AR22-13-1-07

Incorrect: *....., all articles **explain** the results of research on factors*

Correct: *....., all articles **explained** the results of research on factors*

- (7) AR21-12-1-01, AR20-11-2-03

Incorrect: *The results showed that there **are** several potential hazards*

Correct: *The results showed that there **were** several potential hazards*

- (8) AP22-03-1-06, AP22-03-1-09

Incorrect: *The result of the service **is** that pregnant women **give** a positive*

Correct: *The result of the service **was** that pregnant women **gave** a positive*

Those examples exist in purpose, method, and result component. The sentences in the three components should in past tense. Thus, verb 2 is used to change the sentence.

2. Incomplete sentence

There were 14 abstracts having incomplete sentences. Incomplete sentence means the sentence has no subject and or verb that makes unclear sentence.

- (1) AR22-13-1-05

- Incorrect: *The treatment of dry eyes by giving artificial tears*
Correct: *The treatment of dry eyes **is** by giving artificial tears*
- (2) AR22-13-1-10
Incorrect: *Data analysis using the Kendall's Tau statistical test a significance value of*
Correct: *Data analysis using the Kendall's Tau statistical test **showed** a significance value of*
- (3) AR22-13-1-10
Incorrect: *Data analysis with chi square and multiple logistic regression.*
Correct: *Data analysis **used** chi square and multiple logistic regression.*
- (4) AR21-12-2-08
Incorrect: *The purpose of this research to determine the relationship*
Correct: *The purpose of this research **was** to determine the relationship*
- (5) AR21-12-2-12
Incorrect: *This research to identify the relationship stress levels*
Correct: *This research **aimed** to identify the relationship stress levels*
- (6) AR20-11-2-03
Incorrect: *The aim of research to determine the relationship*
Correct: *The aim of research **was** to determine the relationship*
- (7) AR20-11-2-06
Incorrect: *Retrieval of data through a questionnaire. Quantitative data in the form of frequency distribution.*
Correct: *Retrieval of data **was** through a questionnaire. Quantitative data **was** in the form of frequency distribution.*
- (8) AR22-13-1-07
Incorrect: *To determine the factors that influence*
Correct: ***The study aimed** to determine the factors that influence*
- (9) AR21-12-2-03
Incorrect: *Performed using 10 literature review articles*
Correct: ***The research was** performed using 10 literature review articles*

- (10) AR21-12-2-05
Incorrect: *Quantitative research with cross sectional approach.*
Correct: ***The study was** quantitative research with cross sectional approach.*
- (11) AR21-12-1-03
Incorrect: *Describing the implementation of Code Blue*
Correct: ***The research aimed to describe** the implementation of Code Blue*
- (12) AR20-11-2-05
Incorrect: *To get an overview of sexual behavior*
Correct: ***The research aimed** to get an overview of sexual behavior*
- (13) AP21-02-1-02
Incorrect: *Increase participants' knowledge and skills*
Correct: ***It aimed to** increase participants' knowledge and skills*

The examples are some sentences analyzed from 101 abstracts of the two journals. Some of them are having no verb, and there are no subject-verb agreement.

Discussion

As explained in the research objective, there were two aspects which were discussed in this part; type of tenses used in the English abstract and errors in tense.

1. Type of Tenses used in the English Abstract

There were two tenses used in the English abstract of journal published by Universitas Bhamada Slawi. Those were simple present tense for all the components of abstract and the combination of simple present and past tense. There were 44 abstracts using simple present tense, and 57 abstracts using the combination of simple present and past tense. It means that there was no exact requirement of the use of tenses in writing an English abstract in those journals. In fact, in writing an English abstract, generally it should simple present tense to state fact and explain the

implication of the findings, and simple past tense to describe the methodology and the specific findings or the research result; it is also supplemented by the present perfect and past perfect (Joshi, 2013; Magnum, 2021).

2. Errors in Tenses

Errors analysis in this research was focused on the two points; the use of tense in describing past event (purpose, method, and result) and the use of simple present and past tense (incomplete sentences).

a. Describing past event

As we know, to describe past event, it used past tense. In line with that, there are three components of abstract that should be written in past tense, namely purpose, method, and result. However, there were found some errors in the use of past tense especially in arranging sentences in the three components of abstract. As mentioned in the research findings, some sentences had errors in the use of past tense in the three components. For instance “*The research aims to determine...*” should be changed into “*The research aimed to determine....*” The use of verb 1 in the previous sentence is not correct because the purpose of the research has been conducted thus past tense is used to arrange the sentence. On the other hand, verb 2 (past tense) is used to write some sentences about purpose, method, and result.

b. Incomplete sentences

In English grammar, incomplete sentence is called by omission. It is type of grammatical error happened because of omitting words so that the sentence produced is incorrect (Budi, 2016). To avoid the incomplete sentences, the authors should re-check the sentences before submitted to the journal. Also, the reviewers should read accurately so that the English abstract consists of full sentences with correct grammar.

CLOSING

The use of tenses in writing English abstract is really important. Different components of abstract use different tense. For background and conclusion, it should use present tense (both simple present tense and present perfect tense) because the components usually show the statement, fact, and the implication of the findings. Simple past tense (also past perfect tense) is applied in purpose, method, and result as the aspects tell about the past event. Furthermore, some errors in tense have been found in the obtained data. On the other hand, there are still errors in the use of present and past tense, as well as arranging English sentences with correct grammar especially in writing an English abstract. Although the content of the scientific writing uses bahasa Indonesia, English abstract plays an important role in the completeness of the article. Based on the research findings, the researcher gives a suggestion to the journal publishers or even the reviewers that they should more pay attention to the use of tense in each component of abstracts. Also, it should enclose a file about the exact tense used in writing an English abstract.

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