

English Language Competence of Secretary Students through Report Writing: Corpus Based Study

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Abstract

This research is entitled "Observing English Language Competence of Secretary Students through Report Writing: Corpus Based Study". The main purpose of this research is to analyze the language competence of the Secretary Students in one of popular Academy Secretary in Bandung. The Language competence is something important for students in order to understand what they say or what they write. Every language competence implies meanings. Unfortunately not all students know how to understand the meanings through language. What they have in their minds that they have to write in good grammatical patterns. They keep busy memorizing the grammatical patterns without knowing the purpose of those patterns. This research uses the Corpus Linguistics method. This newly method is quite promising and interesting to implement in this research. The definition of Corpus Linguistics is used the theories which was proposed by McEnery and Wilson (1996, 2001), Sinclair et al. (2004), Lindquist (2009), McEnery and Hardie (2012). In collecting data, the writer determined the keywords then found out the implementation of those words into their writing. There are 7 key words which are used by the students frequently. The result of this research shows that the students mostly use the elements of grammar such as determiner of "the" and "a", preposition such as "in", "on", "about"; yet, they rarely implement those 7 keywords with any variation. Lack of using variation collocation to the keywords causing the ambiguity to the readers.

Key Words: corpus linguistics, language competence, secretary, grammar, pattern

Introduction

Mastering language or languages is an absolute prerequisite for a candidate of secretary. The secretary candidate is supposed to have a good communication skill. This requisition is needed considering that a secretary is going to do a lot of interactions with various sides, such as colleagues, managers, and other profession. The aim of communication is sending the message or messages, giving the opinion, or sharing the information. Those aims of communication can be delivered whether by oral or written.

Researcher analyzes report writing of secretary students in one of Academy Secretary in Bandung which is very popular. This Report Writing subject was conducted by students batch 2015/2016, in the class during academic year of 2016/2017. In this lecture, the students were given the exercises of writing various report. One of the report is in the form of graph, pie chart, and bar chart. They were instructed to read those graph, pie chart, and bar chart, then they were asked to deliver their reading result by writing it into the report.

Writing is one of the language skills. Through writing, we can observe one's language ability. It is believed that writing is a kind of reflection of the writer's cognition, since that written will represent the writer him/herself. Unfortunately, there were some weaknesses appeared in the student's writing results. Those weaknesses happened due to lack of confidence in sharing their ideas into writing, the limitation of English grammar comprehending, not to mention the influence of mother native language and also Bahasa Indonesia as our nation language. Those weaknesses occurred in their writing using English but the structure is in Bahasa.

From that case, it can be understood that we have to encourage our students to the needs of language competence and language performance. English language competence has already been taught started from Junior High School until Senior High School, nowadays, mostly English has been taught started in Elementary School. In this article, the researcher discusses English language competence of college students especially secretary students using corpus method.

Theory and Method

This research focuses on analyzing the writing results of Secretary students in Bandung especially in Report Writing subject conducted in the class, those writing results were collected as the data source. The keyword is needed in order to collect the data. In this research, the researcher used the keyword that frequently occurred in the

students writing result. Those frequent words derived from the Antconc software after all data were set into plain text.

This research used Corpus Linguistics and English grammar structure. Concerning of Corpus Linguistics, this research used the frequency of words appeared in their writing result; and concerning of Language Competence, this research used English grammar structure as the standard of understanding. As the keyword, this research used the word of *show*, *give*, *inform*, *increase*, *decrease*, *rise*, and *fall*. Those words were used frequently by students in order to describe the graph.

On the understanding of Corpus Linguistics, the researcher used the theory proposed by McEnery and Wilson (2001), Lindquist (2009), McEnery and Hardie (2012) among others. Corpus Linguistics is the study of language as expressed in corpora (samples) of "real world" text (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corpus_linguistics). Kennedy (1998:1) stated that Corpus Linguistics is a kind of research method which is designed to analyze the corpora. According to McEnery and Wilson (1996:1) Corpus Linguistics also more often analyze the methodology than analyze the language aspects which needs the explanation and description (see dissertation of Citraresmana, 2014: 13).

On the understanding of language competence, the researcher refers to english grammar structure, as mentioned by Biber, et.al. (1999). Biber (1999) suggested that word order in English was used as the grammatical sign which was arranged into four ways as follows.

- (1) The element of clause is arranging in a preferred order in relation to each other; such as the subject occurs before the verb, the verb occurs before the complements: SV, SVA, SVPs, SVOD, SVOp, SVOiOd, SVODOp, SVODPo, SVODa.
- (2) Independent interrogative clauses are signalled through subject-operator inversion. This Subject-Operator inversion is an obligation and should be replaced in the beginning of sentence especially when using the word *never*.
- (3) All clause elements realized by *wh*-words are regularly placed in initial position. Whether it is in the form of independent clause, interrogative, exclamative, or dependent noun, and relative clause.
- (4) Phrases are normally continuous, this is what is called as principle of contact. But in certain cases there is the principle of contact which is not accord with the order. This happens due to the needs of cohesion, emphasizing, or any other stylistic effects.
(Biber, et.al., 1999:899)

Those grammatical principle to the word order used as the reference of analysis. In order to analyze meaning and the usage of the verb, this research used Wordnet. Wordnet is a software used to find out the word, meaning, and the usage.

Corpus Linguistics mainly discusses the method of research. In this research, the researcher referred to the understanding of Palmerian (1933). Palmer (1933) proposed adjacent collocations using descriptive statistics. The data were collected through the frequency of words occurred from the students writing. This collocations in window is understood as collocates. Collocates is the collocation word appeared together with keyword. Both appearances resulted collocation in window. Spans of window are varied, in which the collocates appeared in left or right of node words. This understanding is accord with Sinclair, et.al. (2014) (in Lindquist, 2009: 73 & 78). This adjacent collocation is similar to linguistic structural with descriptive statistic (the appearance of frequent collocation). In this research, data were collected and formed into plain text, then applied into Antconc software. The verbs *give*, *show*, *inform*, *increase*, *decrease*, *rise*, and *fall* were used as the keyword, considering that those verbs commonly used when the graphs were described. So, from those verbs, the researcher analyzed the collocates appeared with the verbs and then will come to the conclusion of the language competence of secretary students in Bandung.

Findings and Discussion

There were 53 texts derived from three parallel classes. From those 53 texts there were 5457 token appeared in the word list resulted from the data collection of student's report writing, as described in the picture below.

Picture 3.1 Word List



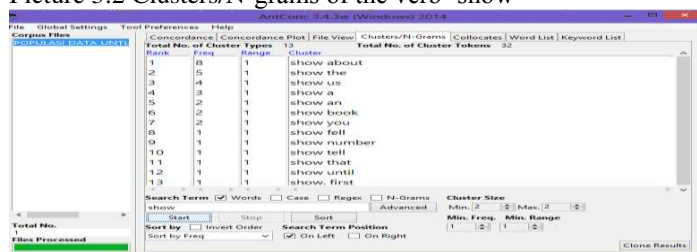
Rank	Freq	Word
1	436	the
2	369	year
3	244	to
4	224	in
5	187	book
6	186	a
7	179	show
8	175	council
9	170	amount
10	154	abandon
11	111	and
12	104	graph
13	103	of
14	94	review

From the picture 3.1 above, it can be seen that determiner ‘the’ appeared as much as 436 times. Those typical appearances also happened when the researcher made a test by typing other verbs such as *show*, *give*, *inform*, *increase*, *decrease*, *rise*, and *fall*. Determiner ‘the’ is the most frequent word used by the students. Those students preferred to use closed class instead of using other words (open class) to show their language performance. Since the topic that was given about the graph, the 2nd place that appeared from their writing result was ‘year’. This word ‘year’ appeared as much as 369 times from the total of word occurrences. Then it was followed by preposition ‘to’ and ‘in’ appeared as much as 244 times and 224 times respectively. These findings are about to discuss in the following.

The Collocates of the Verb ‘Show’

This session is about to discuss the collocates that appeared with the verb ‘show’ as described in the picture below.

Picture 3.2 Clusters/N-grams of the verb ‘show’



Rank	Freq	Cluster
1	8	show about
2	5	show the
3	4	show us
4	3	show a
5	2	show an
6	2	show book
7	2	show you
8	1	show tell
9	1	show number
10	1	show tell
11	1	show that
12	1	show until
13	1	show first

The picture 3.2 above shows that as much as 8 times, the students used preposition ‘about’; and as much as 5 times, the students used determiner ‘the’. Below 5 times, they used possessive pronoun ‘us’ (4 times), determiner ‘a’ and ‘an’ were used about 3 and 2 times. The word ‘book’ and ‘you’ showed about 2 times. The rest is not too frequent used by the students as much as 1 times (see the pictures).

From the cluster/N-grams above, it is understood that the students used determiner ‘the’ frequently appeared together with the verb ‘show’ and then it was followed by preposition ‘to’ and ‘in’; determiner ‘a’; conjunction ‘and’; and preposition ‘of’.

The verb ‘show’ in Oxford Dictionary Thesaurus and Wordpower Guide (2001: 833) means (1) be or make visible; (2) offer for inspection of viewing; (3) present an image of; (4) lead or guide; (5) treat (someone) in a particular way; (6) be evidence of; prove; (7) cause (someone) to understand something by explaining it or doing it oneself. Through the meaning derived from the dictionary above it can be concluded that the verb *show* in the data means *be or make visible*; *offer for inspection of viewing*; *be evidence of*.

In Biber, et.al. (1999:701), the verb ‘show’ is a type of communication verb which is appeared grammatically in a structure of “verb + NP + to-clause (or be verb –ed + to clause)”. Based on the dictionary and grammatical structure of Biber, et.al., it can be understood that the structure of the verb ‘show’ is as follows.

- (1) show [someoneNP] (to see something-to clause)]
- (2) show [a presentationNP]
- (3) [S (is shown-be verb –ed) (to everyone-to clause)]

Based on the understanding proposed by Biber, et.al., (1999), there were only 4 and 2 students who used the structure of “show someone to see something” as in “show us” and “show you” (see picture 3.2). This means that only a few students (6 students) who understand the structure of the verb “show”.

The Collocates of the Verb ‘Give’

The verb of ‘give’ in Oxford Dictionary Thesaurus & Wordpower Guide (2001: 378) means (1) to cause (someone) to have, get, or experience; (2) carry out (an action) or make (a sound); (3) show: he gave no sign of life; (4) put forward (information or argument); (5) have a result; (6) (give off/out) send out (a smell, heat, etc.); (7) admit that (someone) deserves recognition for (something); (8) bend under pressure.

The data shows as below.

Picture 3.3 *Clusters/N-grams* the verb ‘give’

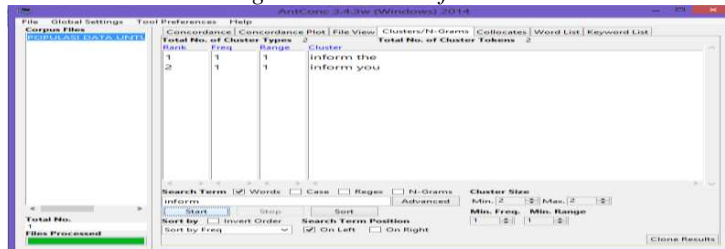


Based on the picture 3.3 above, there was only 1 student who wrote the verb ‘give’ with the appropriate way. This student used the collocate “information” following the verb ‘give’. In the phrase of ‘give more’, based on the English grammar structure the usage of ‘give’ is supposed to be “give something more”.

The Collocates of the Verb ‘Inform’

The verb ‘inform’ based on the Oxford Dictionary (2001: 463) means (1) give facts or information to; (2) (inform on) give information about (someone’s involvement in a crime) to the police. The students chose the collocates ‘the’ and ‘you’ which is described into the picture 3.4 below.

Picture 3.4 *Clusters/N-grams* the verb *Inform*



Based on the picture 3.4 above the usage of the verb ‘inform’ appears together with determiner ‘the’ (1 times) and pronoun ‘you’ (1 times). Those collocates chosen by students could be understood as:

- (1) [We would like to] inform the [graph]
- (2) [We would like to] inform you [that –clause]

This collocates was chosen by 1 student out of 53 students.

The Collocates of the Verb ‘Increase’

The verb ‘increase’ in Oxford Dictionary (2001: 456) means “make or become greater in size, amount, or intensity”. This verb is one of the keyword, since the data is about the text of graph. This graph told about selling in business. There were 5 students chose the preposition ‘in’, 2 students chose to use conjunction ‘and’, 2 other students chose preposition ‘for’, 2 more other students chose adverb ‘slightly’, another 2 students chose preposition ‘to’. The rest is preposition ‘over’ and adverb ‘especially’ to be appeared with the verb ‘increase’. The students choices describe in the picture below.

Picture 3.5 Cluster/N-grams the verb *Increase*

Rank	Freq	Range	Cluster
1	5	1	increase in
2	2	1	increase and
3	2	1	increase for
4	2	1	increase slightly
5	2	1	increase to
6	1	1	increase over
7	1	1	increase, especially

The verb ‘increase’ is both transitive and intransitive. As the transitive, this verb needs the object, on the other hand, as the intransitive, it doesn’t need any object. In Wordnet the usage of this verb ‘increase’ is as follows.

- (3) The amount of work increased
- (4) The university increased the number of students

In number (3) the verb ‘increase’ is in the form of intransitive; and in number (4) the verb ‘increase’ is in the form of transitive since it needs the object.

The result of the students’ writing showed that the students preferred to use preposition ‘in’ as can be seen below.

- (5) There was a slight increase in amount (3 times)
- (6) There was dramatically increase in third year (1 times)
- (7) There were increase in amount of money (1 times)

The usage of the verb ‘increase’ together with the adjective ‘slight’ appeared 3 times which means that there were 3 students who used the same expressions. One student chose adverb ‘dramatically’ together with the verb ‘increase’; and another student arranged the verb ‘increase’ into a clause.

From those analysis, it can be concluded that there were 5 students who had english language competence out of 53 students.

The Collocates of the Verb ‘Decrease’

The verb ‘decrease’ in Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus Wordpower Guide (2001: 224) means “to make or become a smaller or fewer in size, amount, or strength”. The usage of the verb ‘decrease’ in Wordnet is as follows.

- (8) The amount of homework decreased towards the end of the semester.
- (9) He decreased his staff.

The usage of the verb ‘decrease’ through the students’ writing result is as follows.

Picture 3.6 Cluster/N-gram the verb *Decrease*

Rank	Freq	Range	Cluster
1	7	1	decrease in
2	4	1	decrease slightly
3	2	1	decrease on
4	1	1	decrease amount

Based on the picture 3.6 above, it can be seen that students preferred to use preposition ‘in’ following the verb ‘decrease’ as much as 7 students. Let’s take a look at their writing below.

- (10) There was a slight decrease in amount /.../ (7 times)

Based on the corpus, there were 7 students who used exactly the same expression as it is seen in number (10); and there were 4 students who chose adverb ‘slightly’ occurred together with the verb ‘decrease’ with various expressions.

Based on the corpus using cluster/N-gram, the students preferred to use preposition “in” following the verb ‘fall’. As can be seen from the picture below.

Picture 3.9 Clusters/N-Grams the verb *Fall*

Rank	Freq	Range	Cluster
1	6	1	fall in
2	2	1	fall again
3	1	1	fall to
4	1	1	fall in

From the picture 3.9 above, it can be seen that there were 6 students who frequently used preposition “in” following the verb ‘fall’. If it is compared to Wordnet, the verb ‘fall’ is followed by preposition “from”, “to”, “on”, and “into”. Based on findings in the picture, there was only 1 student who used preposition “to”, which is in accord with the usage in the Wordnet (no. 17).

Based on the data and analysis above, the researcher received the picture as below.

Table 3.10 The Language Competence of the Secretary Students through Report Writing

Verb	No. students	Percentage
show	6 out of 53	11%
give	1 out of 53	1.8%
inform	1 out of 53	1.8%
increase	5 out of 53	9.4%
decrease	11 out of 53	20.7%
rise	0 out of 53	0%
fall	1 out of 53	1.8%

Conclusion

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that the language competence of the Secretary Students is very low. It can be seen from the data and analysis above which is described in the table 3.10. From the total of 53 texts, which means 53 students who conducted a report writing, there were less than 30% of the students who could give a good report writing. This is due to the lack of the English grammar structure and mix up with their nation language. It needs a concrete way to overcome this problem and also it needs an urgent works of the English instructors or lecturers to give this “Secretary to be” the treatment of how to use the English language based on pragmatic approach. So that, the students are not merely memorizing the structure but they know how to apply certain words into the sentence.

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