

**AN ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE LENGTH IN COMPOSITIONS MADE BY FRESHMEN ON
PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST IN INTENSIVE COURSE**

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Abstrak

Seperti yang diketahui bahwa menulis adalah sebuah kemampuan bahasa yang sulit untuk dikuasai, menulis menjadi sebuah fokus tersendiri dalam Program Intensive Course (IC) yang diadakan oleh Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris Unesa. Menulis adalah sebuah tolak ukur bagi penguasaan kemampuan berbahasa yang lain seperti mendengar, berbicara dan membaca. Oleh karena itu, tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui panjang kalimat yang dibuat mahasiswa tingkat baru dalam tulisan karangan pre-test dan post-test. Dengan mengetahui panjang kalimat, perkembangan mahasiswa tingkat baru dalam level kemampuan berbahasa (proficiency level) juga dapat diketahui. Dalam perhitungannya, jumlah kata dalam kalimat dan T-unit digunakan untuk menentukan panjang kalimat. Selanjutnya, dari hasil penelitian diketahui lebih dari sample mahasiswa tingkat baru membuat tulisan dengan kalimat yang lebih panjang/kompleks atau pendek/sederhana. Selanjutnya, ditemukan juga bahwa kalimat panjang dan pendek harus dikombinasikan penggunaannya untuk menciptakan tulisan yang ideal. Perbedaan panjang kalimat yang digunakan pada pre-test dan post-test ini juga membawa pengaruh tersendiri bagi level kemampuan berbahasa siswa.

Kata kunci: panjang kalimat, T-unit, menulis dan IC

Abstract

Since writing is a skill that difficult to master, it becomes a center of attention in Intensive Course (IC) Program English Department Unesa. Writing is considered as the entailment of others language skill like listening, speaking and reading. Thus, this study aims to identify sentence length made by freshmen in pre-test and post-test composition in IC. By identifying the sentence length, it was also seen the progress of students' proficiency level. Moreover, words count and T-unit are used as the instrument to measure the sentence length. As the result, it was seen that students' create longer and shorter sentences in the post-test. It was also found that the use of long/complex and short/simple sentences should be combined to present an ideal writing. The difference of sentence length in the pre-test and post-test progressed particularly to students' proficiency level.

Key words: sentence length, T-unit, writing and IC

INTRODUCTION

Among many aspects of pedagogy like curriculum, course design, method, syllabus and lesson plan, it is curriculum that determine the direction of teaching and learning activity. It is because curriculum as a design of a course is built upon many factors through considering the environment, discovering needs and following principles as a purpose of effective teaching and learning (Nation and Macalister, 2010). In Indonesia, curriculum is regarded as a tool to

accomplish the aim of education that develops and meets global need in order to meet global as well as fundament for teaching and learning process. Related to English, especially when it becomes a focus like a program of study in a university, it is important to look deliberately on the curriculum applied in order to result qualified English learners.

Unesa propose a typical design of intensive course for first year students. It is named Intensive Course I and II (IC I and II). Basically, IC I and II are designed as courses to improve freshmen' proficiency level in four skills: writing, speaking,

listening, reading. Writing that is considered as the most complex undertaking in language learning (Lavelle, 2006) and difficult skill to master (Fatemi, 2008) requires a specific attention. Lavelle (2006) proposes that writing mandates attentions at many levels like thematic, paragraph, sentence, lexical and grammatical.

Among those attentions, it is sentence that carries a specific meaning leads to the aim of writing activity, readability. The consideration of readability of text is about to measure how many people in comfortable proportion to read and understand the text (Newbold and Gillam, 2010). Kitson (1921) pointed initially researched about the importance of sentence length as factor influence readability was done by. Furthermore, Newbold and Gillam (2010) point out on word length and sentence length as the matches needed to build a readability of a composition. Readability is defined as the measurement how many people in comfortable proportion to read and understand the text (Newbold and Gillam, 2010). Thus, sentence length serves the function of writing which is to be readable.

Besides readability, Leech (2004) emphasizes on sentence length as the factor contribute to the flow of a text. There is no particular prescribe about an ideal sentence length (Leech, 2004). But many researches profound on writers to vary the sentence length in order to make readers attentive to the text. It is known that the longer the sentence, the more complex it is (Leech, 2004) and harder to read particularly if there are several subordinate clauses with complex relationships between them (Parera, 1984). However, the repeatedly use of simple or short sentence result on the monotonous reading (Leech, 2004). Swan (1979) also highlight early researcher, Anderson, the use of sentence length as a measurement. Furthermore, Janson (1964) points out on the importance of sentence length as an element in writing composition that correlatively results on readers' considerable interest. Broad universities writing center suggest as well the importance of varying sentence length to create a rhythm in writing. It is crucial to hold readers' interest and represent the writers' ability to think creatively and complexly (Parton Univ., 2009). Varying sentence length serves some function of the sentence. When simple sentences are used to highlight and idea, the long sentences are used to give some detail explanation.

Looking thoroughly on sentence length contribution in a composition, EFL are in a demand to perform proportional sentence length. Especially first year students, they should obtain a strong basic knowledge about sentence length. Mastering sentence is a demand to complete different type of writing assignment since writing as a main medium to do assignments for English 'license' degree students (Elachachi, 2010). Sentence is also considered as fragments of a composition. An idea of a sentence should be constructed together with others sentence in order to build the writer's message entirely. Creating the proportional sentence length contributes significantly to present a good composition and helps the writer delivers the message in composition clearly.

Related to the IC, previous study has focused has focused on many attentions like grammatical mistake, the use of derivational verb and the generic structure of the composition. However, there is no study that focuses on sentence length. Thus this study aims to examine freshmen' sentence length as factor influences writing and the relation of sentence length with English proficiency level. Hence the question proposed:

How students sentence length on the pre-test and post-test composition?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Since researcher had no control over the data, ex post facto design was proposed to look on the result of pre-test and post-test compositions. Moreover, the result was described in terms of number and words quantitatively and qualitatively. In term of quantitative, numbers were used to count the words count, T-unit and percentage of students' amount and the progress of proficiency level. In term of qualitative, the result was presented according to some facts related to this study.

Subject of the Research

The subject was English Department students of Universitas Negeri Surabaya. Freshmen of IC program batch 2012 were taken as the population. Simple random sampling was used to take 30 students as the samples from 3 levels of proficiency: intermediate, pre-intermediate and elementary. For each level, it was taken 10 students in order to look the progress of writing.

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Data Collection Technique

The data was collected in form of documentation of pre-test and post-test writing IC batch 2012. After the pre-test and post-test were conducted, the students composition are collected by English Department. The data were given and copied based on the permission of IC 2012 coordinator. Next, the data is analyzed using the theory of T-unit. Then, students' compositions were analyzed in terms of sentence length using words count and the theory of T-unit. Finally, the result is presented in the form of words and numbers.

Data Analysis Technique

To answer the research question, the students' sentence was analyzed by observing the pre-test and post-test compositions. Firstly, the number of words count in every sentence in students' compositions was counted. Then, the most frequently appeared number of word counts was noted and classified to the range of words count: 1-10, 10-20, 20-30, 30-40. Next, the number of words count in the pre-test and post-test compositions are compared in order to look the difference of sentence length.

After analyzing the sentence length based on the words count, the next term measured was T-unit. It helps to identify the sentence length and the construction of the sentence. First, it was identified the T-unit and the number of total T-unit for every sentence in composition. Then, it was noted the most frequently appeared number of T-unit. Next, the numbers of T-unit in pre-test and post-test compositions are compared. By observing the terms of words count and T-unit, it is clearly seen the difference of students sentence length.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on the comparison of the number of words count and T-unit on the pre-test and post-test, there was difference on students sentence length. There were approximately half of the students created shorter or longer sentences by creating sentence with more or less number of words count and T-unit.

Words Count

In term of words count, there are 17 students created different sentence length on the post-test than pre-test, longer and shorter sentence. It was

indicated from the number of words count. Some students created more number of words count and the others created lower number of words count. Basically, the more numbers of words count, the longer sentence created and the less numbers of words count, the shorter sentence created. In order to simplify the result, the words count was classified into some range: 0-10, 10-20, 20-30, 30-40.

However, there is an exception applied in the exemplification. The students who were classified as intermediate on the pre-test and post-test would not be exemplified. This is related to the IC regulation that the others higher proficiency level than intermediate would be still classified as intermediate. The table below helps to draw the result of sentence length based on the numbers of words count and the relation with writing proficiency.

Table 1. Words Count and Writing Proficiency

Words Count		Percentage (%)	
Creating Shorter or Longer Sentence (17 students)	Higher Proficiency (8 students)	26,67	56, 67
	No Progress (3 students)	10	
	Lower Proficiency (6 students)	20	
Creating Sentence with the Same Length (9 students)	Higher Proficiency (4 students)	13,33	30
	No Progress (2 students)	6,67	
	Lower Proficiency (3 students)	10	
Intermediate Exception (4 students)			13,33
Total (30 students)			100

It was seen that creating the longer and shorter sentence by creating more or less number of words count effectively result to higher proficiency. There were 17 students (56,67%) created longer and shorter sentence based on words count and apparently progressed to higher proficiency (26,67%). The progress showed that lower proficiency (20%) was less than higher proficiency (26,67%) and no progress was on the least (10%).

The other 13 students (43%) showed the same number of words count which is indicated there

was approximately no difference on sentence length in both pre-test and post-test compositions. There were 9 students who showed the difference on proficiency level where the other 4 students were in exception since they were on intermediate level both in pre-test and post-test. Although the percentage of students who created sentence with the same length was less than those who create shorter or longer sentence, students also apparently resulted to higher proficiency. There were 4 students resulted to higher proficiency by creating sentence with the approximately same length (13,33%). The progress showed that the number of lower proficiency (10%) was less than higher proficiency (13,33%) and no progress was on the least (6,67%).

Hence, creating longer or shorter sentence due to the production of more or less number of words count was more effective to progress higher proficiency level than creating sentence length with the same number of words count.

T-unit

After using words count as the measurement, the next measurement used T-unit as a term to measure whether a chain of words is a sentence. Similar to words count, the different number of T-unit on the pre-test and post-test indicated the different sentence length. Creating sentences with more or less number of T-unit indicated creating longer or shorter sentences. The exception of intermediate students was also applied. The table below helps to draw the result of sentence length based on the numbers of T-unit and the relation with writing proficiency.

Table 2. T-unit and Writing Proficiency

T-unit		Percentage (%)	
Creating Shorter or Longer Sentence (13 students)	Higher Proficiency (5 students)	16,67	43,34
	No Progress (2 students)	6,67	
	Lower Proficiency (6 students)	20	
Creating Sentence with the Same Length (14 students)	Higher Proficiency (7 students)	23,33	46,66
	No Progress (3 students)	10	
	Lower Proficiency	13,33	

	(4 students)		
Intermediate Exception (3 students)			10
Total (30 students)			100

In term of T-unit, students apparently showed the opposite result than the words count. When creating more or less numbers of words count resulted to higher proficiency, creating more or less number of T-unit was less significance to result higher proficiency. In T-unit, higher proficiency was resulted more by creating sentence with the same number of T-unit (23,33%) than creating sentence the more or less number of T-unit (16,67%). However, creating sentences with the same number of T-unit was also resulted to lower (13,33%) and no progress (10%) of proficiency level.

Meanwhile, the other 13 students tended to create longer and shorter sentences by creating more or less number of T-unit. More or less number of T-unit apparently more resulted to lower proficiency (20%). This number of percentage was f=greater than higher (16,67%) and no progress (6,67%) of proficiency level. Moreover, the intermediate exception on T-unit (10%) was less than words count (13,33%).

Shortly, creating sentence length with the same number of T-unit was more effective to progress higher proficiency than creating sentences with more or less number of T-unit.

Discussions

Basically, all types of production words count and T-unit progressed to various proficiency levels. There was no typical performance of sentence length by words count and T-unit that served particular progress on proficiency level. However, the tendency was showed due to the factors of words count and T-unit. There are 8 students (26,67%) who created shorter or longer sentences by presenting more or less number of words count progressed to higher proficiency level. On the contrary, 7 students created sentences with the same number of T-unit progressed to higher proficiency. Briefly, creating longer or shorter sentences in the way of presenting more or less number of words count and the same number of T-unit were more influential to raise proficiency level than presenting the same number of words count and more or less number of T-unit.

Briefly, the results come to a point that there is no typical performance of simple/short or

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complex/long sentence that perceive particular progress of performance. Students' writing in term of sentence length proves that the use of simple/short and complex/long sentences should be combined in order to create rhythmic composition and hold readers' interest (Walden Univ., 2011). It also enhances the idea proposed by Carroll (1990) that there is no particular definition for short or long sentence but the ideal sentence length influences the clarity of a composition. , sentence length also significantly contributes to influence the readability of a composition (Newbold and Gillam, 2010) which is as an aim of writing.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the result, the study comes to a point that freshmen created different sentence length on the pre-test and post-test. Some of them created longer and shorter sentence by creating more or less number of words count and/or T-unit. Creating shorter or longer sentences possibly progressed to various result: higher, lower or no progress of proficiency level.

There are approximately half of students create sentences with more or less number of words count and T-unit. Some students who create sentences with more or less number of words count and the same number (no difference) of T-unit apparently progresses to higher proficiency level. The other students create sentences with the same number of words count and the more or less number of T-unit apparently progresses to lower proficiency level.

Nevertheless, creating sentence length to shorter or longer does not result to a particular progress of proficiency level. Using merely longer or shorter sentence does not help to present a good composition. The long and short sentences should be combined in order to present an ideal and readable composition.

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