

STUDENTS' ABILITY IN VARYING ENGLISH SENTENCES: A GENDER APPROACH¹

Nurachman Hanafi

Universitas Mataram
e-mail: nurachmanhanafi@yahoo.com

Iwan Jazadi

STKIP Paracendekia NW Sumbawa
e-mail: iwanjazadi@gmail.com

Nuriadi

Universitas Mataram
e-mail: nuriadisayip2017@gmail.com

Udin

Universitas Mataram
e-mail: udinsalam.salam73@gmail.com

Eni Djuhaeni

Universitas Mataram
e-mail: ibuenifkip@yahoo.com

Abstrak: *Studi ini menguji kemampuan mahasiswa dan mahasiswi S1 Bahasa Inggris untuk mengubah kalimat bahasa Inggris sesuai dengan perbedaan gender pada tingkat kalimat dasar: intransitif (one-place verb), transitif (two-place verb) dan ditransitif (three-place verb). Data korpus diperoleh dengan menggunakan tes pilihan ganda tertulis yang terdiri dari 30 item: 10 kalimat intransitif, 10 kalimat transitif dan 10 kalimat transitif. Penggunaan model uji ini dimaksudkan untuk memungkinkan mereka mengubah kalimat dasar bahasa Inggris secara praktis dan efisien dalam hal waktu. Setiap item memiliki 5 pilihan yang benar dan salah. Subyek diminta untuk memilih variasi yang dapat diterima sebanyak mungkin pada setiap item tes sesuai dengan aturan sintaksis bahasa Inggris yang berterima (gramatikal). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa rerata kemampuan para mahasiswa adalah 49,05% (sedang), sedangkan rerata kemampuan para mahasiswi adalah 34,75% (rendah). Adapun perbandingan kemampuan kedua*

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kelompok mahasiswa dan mahasiswi terhadap tiga kalimat dasar sebagai berikut: (a) intransitif (18,28%: 11,94%), (b) transitif (14,21%: 11,33%) dan (c) ditransitif (16,56%: 11,48%). Kemampuan memvariasikan kalimat dasar bahasa Inggris mahasiswa lebih tinggi (14,8%) daripada kemampuan mahasiswi, walau rerata mereka masih tergolong moderat (50%). Ke depan, proses belajar-mengajar ketrampilan menulis Bahasa Inggris dari kalimat sederhana ke lebih kompleks perlu ditingkatkan dengan memperhatikan teori sintaksis agar dapat membantu mahasiswa dan mahasiswi S1 menulis kalimat bahasa Inggris yang benar (*grammatically correct*) dan secara budaya berterima (*culturally acceptable*).

ملخص: تبحت هذه الدراسة قدرة الطلاب على تغيير الجمل الإنجليزية وفقا للاختلافات بين الجنسين في مستويات الجملة الأساسية إنترانسيتيف (الفعل في مكان واحد)، متعدية (الفعل من مكانين) و ديترانسيتيف (الفعل ثلاثة مكان). تم الحصول على مجموعة البيانات باستخدام اختبار اختيار متعدد مكتوب يتكون من 30 مادة، بما في ذلك 10 الجمل إنترانسيتيف، 10 متعدية و 10 جمل متعدية. وكان القصد من استخدام هذا النموذج اختبار لتمكين القدرة على تغيير جملها الإنجليزية بطريقة عملية وفعالة من حيث الوقت. كل بند لديه 5 الخيارات الصحيحة والخاطئة. وقد طلب من الموضوعات اختيار أكبر عدد ممكن من الاختلافات مقبولة على كل عنصر الاختبار وفقا للقواعد النحوية الإنجليزية النحوية. وأظهرت النتائج أن متوسط قدرة الطلاب الذكور هو 49,05% (معتدل)، في حين أن متوسط قدرة الطالبات هو 34,75% (منخفض). إن المقارنة بين كل من الذكور والإناث في الجمل الأساسية الثلاث هي: (أ) الأفعال ذات الموضع الواحد (18,28% : 11,94%)، (ب) الأفعال ذات الموضعين (14,21% : 11,33%) و (ج) ثلاثة الفعل Blace- (16,56% : 11,48%). القدرة على تغيير الجمل الإنجليزية للطلاب الذكور أعلى (14,8%) من قدرة الطالبات، ومع ذلك لا يزال المتوسط مصنفا تحت المعتدل (50%). في المستقبل، فمن الضروري تحسين مهارة التدريس في كتابة الجمل الإنجليزية الأساسية لطلاب المرحلة الجامعية بدءا من الفصل الدراسي الثاني.

Keywords: Gender, variasi kalimat, permutasi.

INTRODUCTION

Writing in English is a complex process for Indonesian undergraduate students when they have to vary English simple sentences into a number of acceptable ones. This is due to the fact that most of them bear limited knowledge on how to organize parts of the sentences into simple, correct and acceptable English in different forms when writing. They often make use of a copying strategy to replace English simple sentences as a solution with Indonesian constructions. As a result, it is hard for them to produce good sentences. Accordingly, a sentence is considered good when it meets two criteria: grammatically correct and culturally acceptable. A sentence might be correct grammatically without being culturally acceptable.²

English and Indonesian typologically assign the same word order (SVO) in terms of accusative languages in that a subject (S) precedes its verb (V) and is followed by an object (O), for instance: (1) *John works hard* and (2) *John bekerja*

² Nurachman Hanafi, *Syntax*, 5th ed. (Mataram: Mataram University Press 2014).

keras. These sentences are structurally identical, but when observed further, they are syntactically different. In example (1), there is a verb agreement between S and its V *work* marked with an inflection *-s* indicating third person singular (3SG) and present tense (PRES), whereas in (2) there is no marker at all neither for 3SG nor for PRES.

Although English and Indonesian show identical word order, they may develop some dissimilar properties in varying basic sentences. English word order can be accounted for into three basic constructions: one-place verb (intransitive), two-place verb (transitive) and three-place verb (ditransitive)³. An intransitive verb does not need an O to achieve meaning. The sentence can end with an adjective, an adverb or a verb itself. It answers question words “*when, where, how, or why*.” A transitive verb needs an O to achieve meaning. The O replies questions with “*who or what*”⁴. A ditransitive verb is one that requires two objects, one of which is direct (DO) and the other is indirect (IO)⁵. It is also known as ‘a double object construction’.

Culicover⁶ and Hanafi, et al⁷ showed that each of English basic sentences can be developed into a number of sentences with the theory of syntax, that is a permutation rule. It is defined as the rule of transferring the phrases (constituents) in perfect sentences to the beginning, to the middle or to the end of syntactically acceptable ones. The transfer of constituents (phrases in sentences) to any positions is sometimes accepted or rejected depending on the characteristic of the language. Research on English basic sentence structures and their variations at the sentence level⁸ has ever undertaken by Salam and Meliasari⁹, Wardani¹⁰, Muryanti¹¹ and Hanafi et al¹².

Salam and Meliasari¹³ observed a variety of English sentence structures in relation to the language used by the third semester students of English Language

³ Nurachman Hanafi, Udin, and Eni Djuhaeni, “Variasi Kalimat Bahasa Inggris Mahasiswa S1 FKIP Unram: Sebuah Pendekatan Sintaksis,” in *Laporan Riset PNPB*, ed. Unram Pascasarjana (Mataram 2016).

⁴ Betty Azar, *Fundamentals of English Grammar* (UK: Longman, 2003).

⁵ Yeun-Jin Jung; Shigeru Miyagawa, “Decomposing Ditransitive Verbs” (paper presented at the Proceedings of SICGG, 2004).

⁶ Peter W. Culicover, *Syntax* (New York: Academic Press, 1976).

⁷ Hanafi, Udin, and Djuhaeni.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Urai Salam and Rahayu Meliasari, “Online Discussion in Ontell: An Analysis on Students’ Sentence Structures,” in *ELTeM International Conference* (Pontianak: ELTeM, 2014).

¹⁰ Sri Wardani, *Analysis of Basic Constructions on Twelve Graders; Writing Test in Man Serpong, South Tangerang* (Jakarta: Uhamka, 2015).

¹¹ Muryanti, “Investigating Students’ Writing Ability in Varying Basic Constructions: A Case Study in Smpn 17 Bekasi,” (Jakarta: Uhamka, 2015).

¹² Hanafi, Udin, and Djuhaeni.

¹³ Salam and Meliasari.

Study Program, Tanjungpura University, Pontianak. The research concluded that in general they used both simple and complex sentences and the biggest problem was run-on sentences (60.51 %) of total errors). This is due to the strong influence of inter-lingual interference and the intra-lingual overgeneralization of the students' mother tongues to their English constructions.

Wardani¹⁴ examined the writings of English students of MAN Serpong in connection with the basic construction of English. The results indicated that their ability to write English sentence variations for three basic sentences is 53%. Muryanti¹⁵ found better results when testing her students in modifying English sentences at SMPN 17 Bekasi (62.5%). Conversely, Eryani¹⁶ discovered her students' writing ability in varying English sentences at MTs Al Musyarrofah South Jakarta (43%).

Hanafi et al¹⁷ studied three English basic sentences of the second semester students at the English Department of Mataram University in search of syntactic formulation by using a syntactic rule analysis called permutation¹⁸. The results obtained are as follows: (1) intransitive sentences consist of three acceptable syntactic rules, (2) transitive sentences have three correct rules, and (3) ditransitive sentences present four grammatical, syntactic rules. Based on these formulae, it can be summed up that the acceptance of several sentence variations reveals the existence of standard and strict syntactical rules.

Of the four studies ever undertaken, no one touches the aspect of abilities based on gender differences. Furthermore, the above findings indicate the need for further research on the same theme but with a more in-depth and broader scope.

Research on gender differences in English learning has received widespread attention among language researchers. Hyde and Linn¹⁹, Smith and Wilhelm²⁰, Connell and Gunzelmann²¹ and Azizah²² have found that gender has a significant

¹⁴ Wardani.

¹⁵ Muryanti.

¹⁶ Fauziah Eryani, "Analyzing Students' Ability in Arranging English Basic Constructions of the Ninth Grade Students at Mts Al Musyarrofah. Unpublished Term Paper," (Uhamka, 2015).

¹⁷ Hanafi, Udin, and Djuhaeni.

¹⁸ Culicover.

¹⁹ J.S. Hyde and M.C. Linn, "Gender Differences in Verbal Activity: A Metaanalysis" *Psychological Bulletin* 104 (1988).

²⁰ MW Smith and Jeffrey D. Wilhelm, *Reading Don't Fix No Chevys: Literacy in the Lives of Young Men* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002).

²¹ D. Connell and B. Gunzelmann, "The Next Gender Gap: Why Are So Many Boys Floundering While So Many Girls Are Soaring?," *Instructor* March (2004).

²² Nurul Azizah, "Gender Differences and Learning Strategies on Academic Reading Abilities at the English Graduate School of Uhamka" (Uhamka, 2011).

influence in the case of a student studying a language. Nevertheless, research on gender differences generally turns up with no-clear-cut conclusions. Therefore, this research focuses on comparing the ability of male and female undergraduate English Department students in varying English basic sentences. The research formulations (the questions raised) are as follows: (1) What is the ability of the male undergraduate English students in varying English sentences? (2) What is the ability of the female undergraduate English students in varying English sentences? (3) What is the ability of both groups to vary English basic sentences?

THEORETICAL REVIEW

A. Syntactic Review

English basic sentences have strict variations in the permutations of forwarding, inserting and terminating between the elements (phrases) so that each element that supports the sentence is not free within the word order it has. Hanafi²³ distinguishes English basic sentences into three groups: one-place verb (intransitive), two-place verb (transitive) and three-place verb (ditransitive). In their previous study, Hanafi et al²⁴ showed some acceptable syntactic rules on English basic sentence variations. They expressed that: (1) the intransitive sentence has 3 (three) kinds of acceptable syntactic rules, (2) the transitive sentence bears 3 (three) correct rules, and (3) the ditransitive sentence is transposed by 4 (four) kinds of grammatical rules of syntax. The examples of the syntactic properties of English can be realized as follows.

In one-place verb construction, the intransitive verb has one core argument NP functioning as S (subject) directly followed by V (verb), and as C (complement). A complement (*as Senior High School teachers*) looks like an O because of its position after its verb. However, it fails to become O due to its promotion to S position in the passive form is not possible. So, the permutation test applied to (1) *Rudy and his wife worked as Senior High School teachers in Jakarta last year* results in the following acceptable syntactic rules (1a) - (1c): (1a) Adv of loc + S + V + C + time, (1b) Adv of time + S + V + C + Adv of loc, and (1c) C + S + V + Adv of loc + Adv of time.

In referring to the acceptable rules above, students are not allowed to write down English intransitive sentence variations as follows: (1d) * *Rudy and his wife in Jakarta worked as Senior High School teachers last year* and or (1e) * *As Senior High School teachers last year Rudy and his wife worked in Jakarta*. The reason for rejecting sentence variation (1d) is due to availability of Adv of loc (*in Jakarta*) between S and V. Similarly, sentence variation (1e) is ill-formed when the Adv of time (*last year*) is between C and S.

²³ Hanafi.

²⁴ Hanafi, Udin, and Djuhaeni.

In two-place verb construction, the transitive verb bears two core argument NPs functioning as S and O (object)²⁵. On the basis of the permutation test to transitive basic sentence (2): *We killed a big lion in the jungle last week*, it produces three acceptable syntactic rules (2a) - (2c). They are: (2a) Adv of loc + S + V + O + Adv of time, (2b) Adv of time + S + V + O + Adv of loc, and (2c) O + S + V + Adv of loc + Adv of time. In conjunction with the three acceptable variations, students are not welcome to write down sentence variations as follows: (2d) * *In the jungle they killed last week a big lion*, (2.e) * *A big lion they last week killed in the jungle*, and (2f) * *They killed in the jungle last week a big lion*. Some syntactic errors can be founding the presence of Adverb of time (*last week*) between V and O as in (2d), the insertion of Adverb of time (*last week*) comes directly after S or before V in (2e), and the position of O (*a big lion*) is after Adverb of time (*last week*) illustrated in (2f).

Subsequently, three-place verb contains three core argument NPs serving as S, DO (direct object) and IO (indirect object)^{26,27,28}. From the result of constituent permutation to (3) *John sent some flowers to his mother from Bangkok two days ago*, it obtains the syntactic formulations (3a) - (3d) as follows: (3a) Adv of source + S + V + DO + IO + Adv from time, (3b) DO + S + V + IO + Adv of source + Adv of time, (3c) IO + S + V + DO + Adv of source + Adv of time, and (3d) Adv of time + S + V + DO + IO + Adv of source.

Here, some sentence variations of (3d) * *Some flowers two days ago John sent to his mother from Bangkok*, and of (3e) * *To his mother two days ago John sent some flowers from Bangkok* are ungrammatical. The reason for the rejection of sentence variation (3d) is that Adv of time (*two days ago*) lies between the fronting DO and S. Example (3d) displays fronting IO followed by Adverb of time (*two days ago*) and S (*John*). In other words, the insertion of Adverb of time between IO and S results in an ill-formed, derived ditransitive construction.

Based on the syntactic formulation of the three English basic sentences presented earlier, it can be concluded that the acceptance of the various English sentences above expresses the existence of syntactic rules which are standard, strict and highly dependent on the property (distinctive trait) of English but are dissimilar from others. For instance, as reviewed by Bhattacharya & Simpson²⁹,

²⁵ Beth Levin, *English Verb Classes and Alternations: A Preliminary Investigation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).

²⁶ RMW Dixon, *A New Approach to English Grammar, on Semantic Principles*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

²⁷ Hanafi.

²⁸ Levin.

²⁹ Tanmoy Bhattacharya; Andrew Simpson, "The Syntax of Double Object Constructions in Bangla/Bengali" (paper presented at the Conference on Ditransitive Constructions Leipzig (Germany), 23-25 November 2007).

in German it is generally agreed that the Indirect Object>Direct Object (IO>DO) is basic, while in Turkish and Persian, DO>IO is basic, and in Japanese both positions are acceptable. In short, even though English and Bahasa Indonesia have the same wording (SVO) but the syntactically accepting sentence variations of the two languages do not exactly produce the same results.

B. Gender Perspective

Azizah³⁰ asserts that the term 'gender' has been mistakenly used to refer to 'sex'. Gender is socially associated with male and female whereas sex is simply given by biology. Therefore, they are not necessarily identical.

In conjunction with gender differences, some experts claim that three points can distinguish male from female: chromosome, brain and behaviour. Reiter³¹ argues that chromosome contains genes. These genes are common to multiply species and are able for one to measure male and female disparities in terms of their characteristics. In his research, he postulates that male has Y-chromosome in his hairy ears whereas female has nothing. Similarly, Richard et al³² discover male and female in brain differences. They claim that male has a larger cerebrum than female by about 8 - 10%. What makes them different is that in using brain mapping, male seems to have more than six times the amount of information processing related to general intelligence. On the other hand, female gains nearly ten times the amount of connection between processing centers related to intelligent compared to male. Additionally, Chafetz³³ describes that gender refers to masculinity and femininity in behaviour. Masculinity is mainly character such as: unemotional, logical, dominating, aggressive, etc. In contrast to it, femininity denotes to qualities and behaviour judged by a particular culture to be associated with females.

Research on gender differences in learning English has received widespread attention among language researchers. Hyde and Linn,³⁴ for instance, conducted a meta-analysis of 165 studies indicating that there is just very little superiority of female students in verbal performance compared to male ones. Similarly, Connell and Gunzelmann³⁵ found that education in the west favors girls who

³⁰ Azizah.

³¹ Raymond Reiter, *Toward an Anthropology of Women (Introduction)* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975).

³² R. Jung R.J. Haier, R. Yeo, K. Head, and M.T. Alkire, "The Neuroanatomy of General Intelligence: Sex Matters," *NeuroImage* 25, no. 1 (2005).

³³ Janet S. Chafetz, *Masculine / Feminine of Human: An Overview of the Sociology of Sex Roles* (London: : Peacock Publishers, 1974).

³⁴ Hyde and Linn.

³⁵ Connell and Gunzelmann.

perform verbally better than the boys. However, Hwa³⁶ found a slightly different result in her study in Malaysia. She found that female students are more afraid about negative assessment from their teachers or friends compared to male students when asked to interact orally in English.

Research on gender related to the ability in varying English basic sentences has not been done by any researcher because the object under study is probably considered to be simple and unimportant. However, they are unaware of the great impacts to English language teaching (ELT) and the study of languages (linguistics) as well. There are also many aspects of investigation related to gender's ability in varying English basic sentences involving many variables that contribute to language research, for example, motivation to write, strategy and specialization of research subjects. However, due to wide range of analyses, this study is limited to discuss on who are more dominant, between male and female undergraduate students, in varying three basic English constructions.

METHODOLOGY

This research is descriptive in nature in the way it describes the disparities of English sentences made by the research subjects in order to show their ability in varying good and acceptable English sentences. The result is then presented with percentage (%). In addition, the variations of acceptable English sentences from intransitive, transitive and ditransitive constructions were analyzed in terms of gender differences. The approach used is a gender approach involving two groups of 30 male and 72 female second semester students of the English Department at Mataram University. The different number of the subjects represents the statistics of the Department which is dominated by female students (approximately two thirds of the population).

The type of data required is the ability to vary acceptable English sentences from three basic ones: one-place verb (intransitive construction), two-place verb (transitive construction) and three-place verb (ditransitive construction) through the written test provided.

The sources of data from this study are the correct alternatives to the results of the Writing Multiple Choice (MC) Test of Varying English sentences as seen in Table 1. The use of this written test model is intended to practically and

³⁶ Siew Pei Hwa, "The Impact of Gender on Speaking Anxiety among Malaysian Tertiary Esl Learners" (paper presented at the Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Language, Literature, Culture & Education Kuala Lumpur, 30 & 31 December 2014 2014).

efficiently capture the ability of the undergraduate students in varying English basic sentences³⁷³⁸³⁹.

Table 1. MC Test of Varying English Sentences

No.	English Basic Sentences	Number of Item Test
1.	Intransitive	10
2.	Transitive	10
3	Ditransitive	10
	Total Number	30

Table 1 exhibitsthree English basic sentences in which each type accommodates 10 items of test so that 30 items are used to measure the students' ability in varying English basic sentences. To see further of its specification (more detailed information needed), the number of options is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Specifications of Writing MC Test

No.	English Basic Sentences	Number of Options
1.	10 Intransitive	$10 \times 5 = 50$
2.	10 Transitive	$10 \times 6 = 60$
3	10 Ditransitive	$10 \times 6 = 60$
	Total Number of Options	170

Table 2 introduces 10 basic intransitive, 10 transitive and 10 ditransitive sentences respectively bearing 50, 60 and 60 alternatives (options). The total number of alternatives are 170. With respect to this, each item test consists of 5 correct and incorrect choices (A, B, C, D and E) for one-place verb, 6 correct and incorrect choices (A,B, C, D, E and F) for respectively two and three-place verbs.

In Table 3 that follows, the key answers are provided for the test makers to cross-check their students' correct answers denoting to the ability of them in varying English basic sentences as expected in the research (especially in three research questions) are presented.

Table 3. Possible Correct options of Writing MC Test

No.	English Basic Sentences	Correct Options
1.	10 Intransitive	$10 \times 3 = 30$

³⁷ David. P. Harris, *Testing English as a Second Language* (New Delhi: Tata McGraw - Hill Publishing Company, Ltd., 1969).

³⁸ Sri Mahawan, "Listening Abilities and Competencies of Pemkot Students to 'I Just Called to Say I Love You' by Stevie Wonder", *Edu-Lingua Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa 2* (2009).

³⁹ "The Relationship of Students' Motivation with the Use of Listening Strategies to Their Listening Abilities at the English Department Muhammadiyah University of Mataram " (Uhamka, 2011).

2.	10 Transitive	$10 \times 3 = 30$
3	10 Ditransitive	$10 \times 4 = 40$
Total Correct Options		100

Table 3 illustrates that every item test in one-place verb consists of 3 (three) correct options of 5 (five) alternatives. Similarly, two-place verb has 3 correct options of 5 (five) alternatives for each item. In contrast to them, three-place verb presents 4 correct options for each item. Altogether, there are 100 syntactically acceptable options.

Research subjects were asked to choose by circling as many variations of acceptable sentences as possible according to the grammatical (acceptable) English syntax rules.⁴⁰ The results were then computed. In order to avoid bias in the calculation, a mean of score (average) of each group was searched.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

The results obtained from the data have been analyzed and presented by referring to three research questions.

Male students' ability in varying English sentences

Table 4 projects that from 30 male subjects, their ability in varying English intransitive sentences (mean 18.28%), transitive (14.21%) and ditransitive (16.56%) is not the same. Thus, their overall average of the number of correct answers is 49.05%. This means that the male students' ability to vary English sentences from three basic sentences is close to moderate (49.05%).

Table 4. Male students' ability in varying English sentences

No.	Students (N)	Intransitive Sentences	Transitive Sentences	Ditransitive Sentences	Correct Answers
1	6	62.7	55.9	58	176.6
2	12	142	126.8	142	430.8
3	6	67	58	52	177
4	6	123.4	25.3	60.8	209.5
5	10	153.3	160.4	184	497.7
Total	30	548.4	426.4	496	1471.6
Mean (%)		18.28	14.21	16.56	49.05

⁴⁰ Hanafi.

Female students' ability in varying English sentences

Table 5 shows that of the 72 study subjects (female group), their ability in varying English sentences is 11.94% for the intransitive, 11.33% is for the transitive, and 11.48% is for the ditransitive. It can be summed up that the general ability to vary the English sentence is indicated by the overall mean of 34.75%. In other words, the overall mean shows that students' ability to vary English sentences from three basic sentences is low (34.75).

Table 5. Female students' ability in varying English sentences

No.	Students (N)	Intransitive Sentences	Transitive Sentences	Ditransitive Sentences	Correct Answers
1	16	167	194	214	575
2	9	106.7	95	106.7	308.4
3	12	134	116	104	354
4	16	145	202.6	162	510.2
5	20	306.6	208.5	240	755.3
Total	72	859.9	816	826.7	2502.9
Mean (%)		11.94%	11.33	11.48	34.75

The ability of both groups of students in varying each of the English sentence levels

After comparing the results of Tables 4 and 5, Table 6 is presented to show that the ability of male and female students in varying English basic sentences is as follows: 18.28% (male): 11.94% (female) for intransitive, 14.21% (male) : 11.33% (female) for transitive, and 16.56% (male): 11.48% (female) for ditransitive. It can be summed up that male students are better (14.8%) than female ones (see the comparison of 49.05% (male): 34.75% (female)) in varying English basic sentences.

Table 6. The ability of both groups in varying English sentences

No.	Students (N)	Intransitive Sentences	Transitive Sentences	Ditransitive Sentences	Correct Answers
1	30	18.28 %	14.21 %	16.56 %	49.05 %
2	72	11.94 %	11.33 %	11.48 %	34.75 %
Difference (%)		6.34 %	2.88 %	5.08 %	14.8 %

The average ability in varying English sentences between male and female subjects was outlined as 49.05% and 34.75% respectively. However, when the two groups were compared in terms of the three basic sentences, the results were: (a) 18.28%, 14.21% and 16.56% for male students, whereas (b) 11.94%,

11.33% and 11.48% for female students. In short, male students' ability in varying English sentences is higher (14.8%) than female ones'.

DISCUSSION

Intransitive Sentences

In a one-place verb (intransitive) construction, the verb has one core argument as S (subject) which is directly followed by V (verb) and C (complement), for example: (1) *Rudy and his wife worked as Senior High School teachers in Jakarta last year*. Based on the permutation test the following syntactic rules (1a) - (1c) are obtained: (1a) Adv of loc + S + V + C + Adv of time, (1b) Adv of time + S + V + C + Adv of loc, and (1c) C + S + V + Adv of loc + Adv of time.

The results showed that both male and female students tend to choose English intransitive sentence variations incorrectly as in: **Rudy and his wife in Jakarta worked as Senior High School teachers last year* and or **As Senior High School teachers last year Rudy and his wife worked in Jakarta*. The reason for the rejection of these variations is that: (1) Adv of loc (*in Jakarta*) is present between S and V, and (2) Adv of time (*last year*) is between C and S. Both errors are copied from Indonesian sentence-structures which are true in Indonesian as in: (1) *Rudy dan isterinya di Jakarta bekerja sebagai guru SMA tahun lalu* dan (2) *Sebagai guru SMA tahun lalu Rudy dan isterinya bekerja di Jakarta*.

Transitive Sentences

The transitive sentence has two core argument NPs (noun phrases) which function as S and O (object)⁴¹. Referring to the permutation test on transitive basic sentences, example (2) *They killed a big lion in the jungle last week* generates acceptable syntactic rules (2a) - (2c) as follows: (2a) Adv of loc + S + V + O + Adv of time, (2b) Adv of time + S + V + O + Adv of loc, and (2c) O + S + V + Adv of loc + Adv of time.

Most male and female students preferred choosing incorrect English sentence variations as follows: **In the jungle they killed last week a big lion*, **A big lion they last week were killed in the jungle*, and **They were killed in the jungle last week a big lion*. The incorrect choices were caused by the improper positions of adverb of time (*last week*) and O, such as (1) between V and O, (2) between S and V, and (3) O (*a big lion*) after Adverb of time (*last week*). All of them were adopted from Indonesian sentence structures which they assumed to be equivalent in English. Consider Indonesian sentence-structures: (1) *Di hutan mereka membunuh kemarin seekor singa besar*, (2) *Seekor singa besar mereka kemarin membunuh di hutan*, dan (3) *Mereka membunuh di hutan kemarin seekor singa besar*.

⁴¹ Levin.

Ditransitive Sentences

A ditransitive sentence has three core arguments that serve as S, DO (direct object) and IO (indirect object)⁴². From the result of permutation of constituents in example (3) *John sent some flowers to his mother from Bangkok two days ago*, the syntactic formulations of (3a) - (3d) are obtained as in the following: (3a) Adv of source + S + V + DO + IO + Adv from time, (3b) DO + S + V + IO + Adv of source + Adv of time, (3c) IO + S + V + DO + Adv of source + Adv of time, and (3d) Adv of time + S + V + DO + IO + Adv of source.

Unlike (3a) - (3d), the other varying sentences like the following: **Some flowers two days ago John sent to his mother from Bangkok*, and **To his mother two days ago John sent some flowers from Bangkok*, are considered grammatically ill-formed. These English incorrect sentences seemed to be translated from Indonesian sentences, as in: (1) *Bunga dua hari yang lalu dikirimkan John dari Bangkok*, and (2) *Kepada ibunya dua hari yang lalu John mengirim bunga dari Bangkok*. In the first, Indonesian passive voice is used to achieve its meaning by equivalency⁴³. However, English sentence structure rejects the use of adverb of time between the fronting DO and its verb. In the second one, English sentence structure discards the use of adverb of time between the fronting IO and S.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study are summarized as follows: (1) the male students' ability in varying English sentences is 49.05%, (2) the ability of female students to vary English sentences is 34,75%, and (3) while the ability of both of the three forms of sentence is 30.22%; 25.54% and 28.04%. These results indicate that both groups are still experiencing difficulties in varying the three English basic sentences. The results of this study showed that the ability of the undergraduate students of English Department of Mataram University in varying English sentences is still weak. Therefore, the following suggestions are recommended. First, English lecturers who teach *Elementary Writing* should be able to introduce English basic sentences (intransitive, transitive and ditransitive) with their varying sentences along with syntactic relations (S, O, DO and IO)⁴⁴ and syntactic rules so that undergraduate students can write English well which is grammatically correct and culturally acceptable. Second, presenting materials with complex sentences (dependent/independent clauses, relative clauses, coordination,

⁴² Dixon.

⁴³ Hanafi.

⁴⁴ F.R. Palmer, *Grammatical Roles and Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

complementation) can provide the students with the understanding of syntactic pivots⁴⁵ when taking *Pre-Intermediate* Writing classes.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

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