CHAPTER III

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE TOPIC

3.1 The Using of Past Tenses in Research Article

The using of tenses in a research article is important. That's why understanding of tenses used in writing is definitely needed. The writer must know how to differentiate which part in article that should use past form, present form, or future form. Nevertheless, a research result in an article generally uses present form. It is because the result of a research often becomes a fact that is believed still true until now. For example, there is a research result that uses present tense; *Sexual dimorphism in body size is common among butterflies*. (Taken from Singer1982).

The example above shows how a research result uses present tense that generally is widely known fact. It is different when a research result uses past tense; *We hypothesized that adults would remember more items than children.*

Azar said in her book about present simple; *"The simple present said that something was true in the past, is true in the present, and will be true in the future. It expresses general statements of fact and timeless truths."* (page 13, 1999), and past simple; *"The simple past indicates that an activity or situation began and ended at a particular time in the past."* (page 27, 1999).

According to this understanding, it leads to an assumption that a research result uses present tense, because a research result that is a general truth commonly becomes a fact and then widely known by people especially people who research in the same field. It is wondered if past tense is used to deliver research result, how to use or apply it? Furthermore, what kind of research result that uses past tense or when is past tense used in delivering research result?

3.2 Data analysis

There are 5 data found from some medical articles that use past tense in delivering the research result, and the analyzing:

Data 1:

[1]Fresh Binahong leaves used in this study was obtained from Jalan Sukawening, Bandung. [2]The leaves were identified in the Plant Taxonomy Laboratory of Universitas Padjadjaran. [3]Next, the fresh leaves were washed thoroughly few times under running tap water.

Data analysis 1:

The sentence number 2, "the leaves were identified in the Plant Taxonomy Laboratory of Universitas Padjadjaran," is in past form. It is because the research conducted in the past is only a step to reach the result expected and has no relation with the present. Therefore, the using of past tense in here is to fulfill procedure of a research.

Data 2:

[1]Our study was conducted on medical students of Universitas Padjadjaran from batch 2009-2011. [2]The sample of our study contained 46 people consisted of 27 males and 19 females. [3]In male students, from 27 people, there were 25 people with normal hemoglobin level and 2 people with low hemoglobin level. [4]Whereas in female students, from 19 people, there were 15 people with normal hemoglobin level and 6 people with low hemoglobin level. [5]The female students were more likely to have low hemoglobin level compared to male students. [6]The mean age of all subjects was 19 years old.

Data Analysis 2:

The research above shows that sentence used in delivering the research result about hemoglobin level in each student, is past tense. As I know, the research result is a fact that is recognized the truth in the past, present, and in the future, however, the research result in this case uses past tense, not present tense.

It is because the writer of the journal tried to deliver a temporary result, that may change anytime. Hemoglobin level in each person is different, which has low hemoglobin, normal hemoglobin, or high hemoglobin. Someday, people's hemoglobin will change as they grow up. Based on this temporary hemoglobin level, the writer then reported the research result in past tense. Even though this research result is a fact that is recognized by some people, however, the fact about hemoglobin level in

each student that is observed may change as they grow up. Therefore, the using of past tense is for delivering the research result that can change anytime, for example the hemoglobin level in this case.

Data 3:

[1]From all cataract patients with high-degree myopia who underwent phacoemulsification in this study, 59.5% came from Bandung. [2]Patients who came from outside Bandung were from West Java area; Jakarta Bogor, Tangerang, Bekasi (Jabotabek), and Central Java area. [3]About 96.2% were poor patients while general patients only made up 3.8%.

Data Analysis 3:

The sentence number 1 that tells where the cataract patients come from, it is used past tense. It is different from what people think that to show where people live, it is usually used present tense. Like when someone asks others "where do you live?" then the answer is commonly "I live at/in …" It is uncommon if people answer with past tense, except if they are asked where they lived before. In other words, when people talk about residence, then they tend to ask and know where others live in/at.

In this case, the writer wrote where the patients come from in past tense, because he tried to tell the reader that where the patients lived at the time is a fact in the past and now the writer does not know where the patients live. The patients may move to other cities that the writer will not

know further. Because what is needed for the patients data is a concrete address or where they live at the time while they were patients. Therefore, the using of past tense is for delivering the research result that can change anytime.

Data 4:

Cataract is the leading cause of blindness in the world. [1]The World Health Organization (WHO) stated that cataract causes 39% of blindness, 18% of refractive error, and 10% of glaucoma. [2a]WHO also estimated that [2b]18 million people suffer from bilateral blindness caused by cataract.

Data Analysis 4:

The sentence number 2, the writer uses past tense and present tense in delivering the research result. It is because the clause in 2a, "WHO also estimated that" is what happened in the past. It has no relation with the present, because it is not the result of the research but just a statement from WHO. The real research result is the clause in number 2b, "18 million people suffer from bilateral blindness caused by cataract." It is a research result that widely known by people and still has relation with present. It may the last research conducted and there no recent research yet about the causes of bilateral blindness.

In that sentence, there are two tenses to explain what the research result about. It is possible when the case is like the sentence above. One

clause is a past that has no relation with present, while another clause is a widely known fact until now. It is like what a scientific writing guide from the University of Melbourne said; *"Past tense to summarise findings, with present tense to interpret results. Writers may use the past tense to summarise their findings, in combination with the present tense to explain or interpret what the results mean."*

Because of that, in this fourth data past tense is used when the research is in a statement that reveals the previous research.

Data 5:

[1]A study by Joshi and Shakya, a research about the change in refractive status of the patients undergoing phacoemulsification surgery, showed that 61.3% cataract patients without high-degree myopia who underwent phacoemulsification have preoperative visual acuity of less than 6/60, meanwhile only 9.09% have visual acuity above 6/18.

Data Analysis 5:

The research above uses the word 'showed' when delivering the research result conducted before. But what is asked, is why this research uses past tense, not a present whereas it is a general truth from the research of Nepal Medical College journal, 2009 that is used as a reference by another writer in his/her medical article.

It is because, the research about the change in refractive status of the patients undergoing phacoemulsification surgery was conducted in

2009 by Joshi and Shakya. It brings an assumption that other researches were conducted in the recent time and the result of the research is different from the previous research. It makes the research result conducted in 2009 uses past tense, to show to reader that it is a research that the validity is changed by a recent result.

3.3 Problem and Solution

3.3.1 Problem

During editing the right English form in article, the present writer found difficulty in differentiating which part of research result that should use present or past form. Therefore, I had to be able to know which result that the validity of the research is still recognized until present, with understanding what the article writer meant from the beginning to the end of the article. Because if I could not catch what his/her meant, it is hard to differentiate which part that should use present of past form.

3.3.2 Solution

To find a solution of a problem that I had during the job training , I had to discuss and share my difficulty to the senior editor, in order to be able to solve the problem. In addition, fortunately I could get the feedback from the senior editor, so I could learn from her editing result with comparing it to my editing result.