

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Rationale

Human beings can't live alone in this world. They always need helping from others. To interact with others they need language. The language is important to build or to tell information or messages. Language is also used to expand science, to express our ideas, thought, opinions and feeling to others in oral or written form. Human beings use different languages in their communication. These differences show that Allah, the Creator and the Master of this world and all things for the happiness of human beings in the world and hereafter. Allah the Almighty said in the Holly Qur'an in surah Ar-ruum verse 22 as follows:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَخْتَلَفُ الْأَلْسِنَةَ وَاللُّغَةَ وَالْوَسْمَانَ  
إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾

According to Mary Finocchiaro, language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols which permits all people in a given culture or other people who have learned the system of that culture, to communicate or to interact.<sup>1</sup> Also every country has different languages, and one of the languages is English. As an international language, English is widely used in almost all aspects of human life, like a tool of communication.

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Finocchiaro, *English as a Second Language; from theory to practice*, (New York: Regents Publishing Company, Inc, 1974), p.3

Therefore, it is obligatory to master English today. Indonesian government also made rule that English must be taught. The reason is that English is a global or an international language. The global status of English is partly due to the number of people speak it. English is underpinned by its wide use in a range of fields such as politics, diplomacy, international trade and industry, commerce, science and technology, economics and business, international relations, the media, education, communication and international travel.<sup>2</sup>

In teaching-learning English, there are four skills must be developed and mastered by students, they are: listening, speaking, reading and writing.<sup>3</sup> The elements of English given in classroom like grammar, vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation are supposed to support the mastery and the development of the four skills of that language. All these language skills and components are related to each other, so the students must be trained adequately in all the four basic skills to make them easily practice and use the language.

As we know that today students need to see how grammar fits into the writing process, writing is skill that requires more practice. The writing skill or mastery is not obtained naturally, but it needs to do training step by step. Therefore, in teaching learning process of writing the students must be involved especially in

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<sup>2</sup> Elvin Miradi, "Fungsi Bahasa Inggris dalam Dunia Pendidikan", [www.elvinmiradi.com/funsibahasainggrisdalamduniapendidikan.com/2011/05/05/html](http://www.elvinmiradi.com/funsibahasainggrisdalamduniapendidikan.com/2011/05/05/html)

<sup>3</sup> Henry Guntur Tarigan, *Menulis Sebagai Suatu Keterampilan Berbahasa*, (Bandung: Angkasa, 1985), p. 1

exercise and evaluation. One way to improve students' writing is the English teacher should teach and give some task that related with the topic in English book.

Grammar is one important subject matter that should be mastered in writing English. Grammatical sentences are easy to understand by interlocutors rather than ungrammatical ones. Moreover in writing, sentences have to be constructed in grammatically accepted form including the use of tenses. Tense is a verb form that shows the time of the action, such as present, past and future. Every tense is divided into simple, continuous, perfect and perfect continuous. However, the writer just focuses on one tense that is past tense. The past tense indicates that an activity or situation began and ended at a particular time in the past.<sup>4</sup> Past tense has four types they are: simple past tense, past continuous, past perfect and past perfect continuous.

The fact, in teaching and learning grammar, especially past tense, there are some problems that are faced by students in writing. They often do some mistakes of using simple past tense, past continuous, past perfect and past perfect continuous. They also sometimes make some errors like using auxiliary, verb in past participle (irregular and regular) and using time expressions like since, before and after. The problems are not without reason, because some students still do not understand how to use them correctly in writing. When they learn about past tense, some students have still confused to use them based on particular situation.

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<sup>4</sup> Betty Schramper Azar, *Understanding and Using English Grammar, Second Edition*, (America: Prentice Hall Regents, 1989), p. 24

In this case, verb tenses have essential role, because they tell readers when actions are taking place. Careful and accurate use of tenses is also important to clear writing. For instance, if the verbs in a passage refer to actions occurring at the past actions, then the past tense is definitely needed to be used.

In this research, the writer interested to know how well the students' mastery of past tense and express it in past activities in form of writing.

Based on the observation done by the writer during teaching practice in one school in Banjarmasin, she found many students have difficulties in grammar. One of complicated forms of tenses they understand was past tense.

According to the background of this study, the writer interested conducting a research on the title: The Correlation Study Between Students' Mastery of Past Tense and Their Ability in Expressing Past Activities in Writing at the Eleventh Grade of SMA 1 Tamiang Layang Barito Timur Regency in Academic Year 2010/2011.

There are some terms used in this research. In order to avoid misunderstanding of them, some key terms are defined as follows:

1. Correlation : According to Advance American Dictionary, correlation means relationship between two ideas, facts etc, and the process of correlating two or more things especially when one

may be the cause of the other.<sup>5</sup> Suharsimi Arikunto also said that correlation research attempt to determine weather there is any relationship or not and to what extent a relationship between two more variable exist.<sup>6</sup> In this research, the correlation means the variables, students' mastery of past tense and their ability to express past activities in writing.

2. Study : In this research study means process to learn something scientifically.<sup>7</sup> The process can influent students' mastery of past tense and their ability in expressing past activities in writing.

3. Mastery : Mastery is gain complete knowledge of or skill of something. To gain control of something is to overcome something, able to control other; dominating, very skillful, great skill.<sup>8</sup> In this research, it means the ability of one of English skill which is taught at Senior High School I Tamiang Layang Barito Timur Regency, that is writing.

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<sup>5</sup> Longman, *Advanced American Dictionary, New Edition*, (America: Pearson Longman, 2007), p. 357

<sup>6</sup> Suharsimi Arikunto, *Prosedur Penelitian*, (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 2007), p.31

A.S. Hornby, *Oxford Advance Learners Dictionary of Current English, Fifth Ed.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 1187

<sup>8</sup> Alan Evison, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 721

4. Past tense : Past tense is one of the verb forms indicating an activity or situation that began and ended at a particular time in the past.<sup>9</sup> In this research, it is means the students' ability to understand and to apply past tense in writing English.
5. Writing : Writing means forming graphic symbols on a flat surface of some kind (for example in a sheet of paper) to transfer our ideas (feeling and thought).<sup>10</sup> This writing it is means the act of a person who writes. In this research, it means an English focusing on the past activities.

So, correlation study between students' mastery of past tense and their ability in expressing past activities in writing means research about to find correlation between two study, is there any correlation or no.

## **B. Statement of the Problem**

Concerning with the topic, the problem in this research is about correlation between mastery of past tense and ability in expressing past activities in writing. To understand well the problem, it is formulated as follows :

1. How do the eleventh grade students of SMA 1 Tamiang Layang in academic year 2010/2011 master the past tense in English?
2. How is the students' ability in expressing past activities in writing English?

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<sup>9</sup> Betty Schramper Azar, *loc.cit.*, p.24

<sup>10</sup> Byrne Done, *Teaching Writing Skill*, (Harlow: Longman Group Ltd), p. 1

3. Is there any correlation between the students' mastery of past tense and their abilities in expressing past activities in writing?

### **C. Reasons for Choosing the Title**

There are some reasons of choosing the title, they are :

1. Many students still have difficulties in using past tense though they have studied it previously. When they apply the tense in writing, especially in expressing their past experience, some of them can't use it properly.
2. Writing is one of the important skills to be mastered, but some students considered it difficult to learn. So, the teacher must teach it with extra work to the students.

### **D. The Research Purposes**

There are the purposes of this research:

1. To know how well the students of Senior High School I Tamiang Layang master grammar especially past tense.
2. To know the students' ability to express it in their past activities in the form of writing.

3. To know whether or not there is a correlation of students mastery of past tense and their abilities in expressing past activities in writing.

### **E. Significance of the Research**

1. The study will be useful for the students to see their ability in writing past tense. By that, expected that they could improve their grammar mastery as well as their writing skill in the future.
2. The writer, to enrich her knowledge about English language.
3. This study can function as reference for the English teachers to teaching grammar and writing skill.
4. The result of this study is expected to be significant for the next researchers who will do similar research, but more deeply.

### **F. Assumptions and Hypothesis**

#### 1. The Assumptions

There are two basic assumptions in this research. They are as follows:

- a. Each student has different ability in mastering past tense.
- b. Each student has different ability in expressing past activities in writing.

#### 2. Hypothesis

Based on the assumptions, then the writer want to verify the hypothesis ( $H_0$ ), that is:



“There is no significant correlation between students’ mastery of past tense and their ability in expressing past activities in writing at the eleventh grade of SMA 1 Tamiang Layang Barito Timur Regency in academic year 2010/2011”

However, since the way of testing is conducted by using statistics, the statement above is changed into Hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) as follows:

There is a positive correlation between the students mastery of past tense and their abilities in expressing past activities in writing.

## **G. The Organization of Writing**

This study consists of five chapters as follows:

Chapter I is introduction, which consists of rationale, statement of problem, reasons for choosing the title, research purposes, significance of research and organization of writing.

Chapter II is theoretical review, which consists of definition of grammar, the importance of grammar, definition of the past tense, the use and function of past tense, the definition of writing and definition of good writing.

Chapter III is method of the research, which consists of population and sample of the research, data and source of the data, techniques of data collecting, techniques of data processing and analysis, design measurement and research procedure.

Chapter IV is report of research result, which consists of description of research location, description of data presentation and data analysis.

The last Chapter is Chapter V, which consists of the conclusion and the suggestions of the study.