English and Indonesian Singular Forms: A Case of Nouns

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ABSTRACT

This study is aimed at finding out the similarities, dissimilarities, and possible learning difficulties faced by students learning English and Indonesian singular forms as well as its contribution to TEFL. The researchers used a qualitative research design. The documentation technique was used to collect the data. To analyze the data, the researchers used descriptive analysis. The results showed that there were four similarities and two dissimilarities between English and Indonesian singular forms. The four similarities were in indefinite article, definite article, quantitative adjective, and units of measurement. While the two dissimilarities were in the definite article and definite article. The possible learning difficulties faced by students learning English and Indonesian singular forms were that they were not very familiar with grammar rules and it made them perplexed and created mistakes when writing and speaking. The contribution was as teaching guidance that assists English teachers to create a better teaching Grammar design on singular forms in terms of countable and non-countable nouns.

Keywords: countable nouns, non-countable nouns, singular forms

1. INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of writing this research, it is much better to define what a language is. Language is the system of structural arrangement of human's sounds used to communicate related to written representation unit such as morphemes, words, sentences, utterances, etc." (Richards, et al., 2002) in Sulaiman & Syahri, 2022; Sulaiman, Syahri & Saputri, 2022). It can also be defined as a set of arbitrary symbol having conventionalized meanings and being used for communication, operating in a speech community (Sulaiman, 2020; Sulaiman, 2018; Sulaiman, 2017; Sulaiman & Yuliani, 2017). Language refers to the concrete act of speaking, writing or signing in a given situation. It is also regarded as variety or level of speech or writing. (Crystal, 2008).

As a foreign language, English is very important to be learnt by heart after students' national language, Bahasa Indonesia. In fact, there are many problems faced by students when learning English grammar, such the use of nouns in sentences because they do not know more on the grammatical rules. It was supported by Karam, et al., (2020) who found out that noun was one of the grammar categories which prominently and persistently becomes problem for foreign students in learning English due to the lack of knowledge of grammatical rules. In this research, most students have problems in using singular forms. They look mixed up having good English and Indonesian singular forms when writing or speaking. They tend to make some mistakes when writing or speaking as in "an university" instead of using "a university". They also make such kind of mistake in Bahasa

Indonesia as in "sebuah kertas" instead of saying "selembar kertas". It happens because of the influence of L1 (first language). It is also due to their weaknesses in grammar that they tend to make such mistakes. In other words, they do not understand the rules of English and Indonesian singular forms, even though their English teacher has done such a great effort to explain grammar in singular forms during the lesson in the classroom. It is normal for them to have such conditions since English and Indonesian have different grammatical characteristics. This problem ought to be discussed and coped with a contrastive analysis (CA). This contrastive analysis (CA) is related to two different languages or a pair of languages compared with practical needs like teaching and learning, translation study, and further research (Kridalaksana, 2008; Sukirmiyadi, 2018). Moreover, Thyab (2022) confirmed that contrastive analysis examines different languages with the aim of discovering their structural similarities and differences. It is a method used to explain reasons behind new language learning difficulties and reasons why some features of a target language were more difficult to learn than others. In brief, contrastive analysis (CA) is a linguistics analysis that is regarded as revealing the elements of differences and similarities between two different languages.

Generally, there are three versions of contrastive analysis for instance: the weak and the moderate. The strong form is such the prime or sole cause of difficulty and error in foreign language learning intruded by the learners' native language. The two language differences created a comparison used to predict learning difficulties and errors. The weak form regards on the linguist's best knowledge used to account for second language learning difficulties. The moderate form predicts the results of a spelling error analysis on the dictation. (Khansir & Pakdel, 2019). In short, contrastive analysis is such a comparative analysis that is done to see the comparison of two languages and also to figure out the learning difficulties as the teaching recommendations.

Like other experts, Al-khresheh, (2016) reported five procedures commonly used to compare two or more languages, such as: (1) selection which has something to do with selecting or taking the two languages, L1 and L2, and writing formal descriptions of them that needs choosing a special theoretical model which can be traditional, structural or transformational. (2) description which has a connection with describing the selected linguistic units/structures of the two languages based on CA theories to find out the differences. (3) comparison which has been in line with comparing the linguistic-selected units which have been described. (4) prediction which has relationship with making the prediction of difficulty and (5) verification which refers to verifying the predictions to know whether or not there are difficulties on the basis of the contrastive analysis of the two languages.

As a matter of fact, there were some preliminary studies discussing the contrastive analysis of English and Indonesian singular forms related to nouns. One of them was a study conducted by Mulyawan, (2014) which was very different from the researchers' study. In other words, the researchers' study was much better than his. The researchers' study was detailed and complete. It discussed similarities, dissimilarities, possible learning difficulties, and contributions to TEFL, but Mulyaman's study only discussed similarities and dissimilarities. It had no possible learning difficulties and contribution to TEFL.

Furthermore, the objectives of this research were to find out the similarities and the dissimilarities between English and Indonesian singular forms of countable and non-countable nouns and the possible difficulties faced by both Indonesian and English-speaking students in studying English and Indonesian singular forms of countable and non-countable nouns and the recommendations of contrastive analysis (CA) between English and Indonesian singular forms of countable and non-countable nouns to the teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL).

In addition, the results of this research would give valuable information to the researchers themselves about English and Indonesian singular forms of countable and non-countable nouns. The

results of this research also could be useful for all of the university students in learning more deeply about grammar usage and function, especially in singular forms of countable and non-countable nouns. Finally, the results of this research were expected to be able to uncover or to predict the possible problems or difficulties faced by Indonesian students in studying English singular forms of countable and non-countable nouns as well as become recommendations to the teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) in terms of the dissimilarities of both English and Indonesian singular forms of nouns to help the teachers of English to be able to design such teaching materials in teaching English grammar that enables the students to understand singular forms of countable and non-countable nouns. From the explanation stated, the researchers were keen on conducting research under the title "English and Indonesian Singular Forms: A Case of Nouns".

2. METHOD

The method of this research was a descriptive-qualitative method in line with describing the facts in terms of words and phrases and not related to numerical numbers. In other words, the researchers described and used approximately 120 existing pieces of information or data about English and Indonesian singular forms of countable and non-countable nouns which were obtained from primary data (i.e. English and Indonesian grammar books and secondary data (i.e. national and international journals). The method of this research was supported by a theory of descriptive research by Tavakoli (2012) who states that descriptive research is similar to qualitative research because it deals with naturally occurring phenomena using data that may either be collected firsthand or taken from already existing data sources. In this research, the researchers used a documentation technique to collect the data. According to Syahri, Sulaiman & Susanti (2017), documentation is a technique used to collect existing data by writing it. In this context, the researchers did some procedures, such as searching and reading some books and journals related to English and Indonesian singular forms of nouns, then writing down the important points or data about the examples of singular forms of nouns both in English and in Bahasa Indonesia. After that, the researchers put the data into a personal document. The data that had been collected were analyzed by James' theory of Contrastive Analysis (CA) (1980) as cited in Keshavarz (2012) through five procedures, for instances: selecting, describing, comparing, predicting, and verifying the data of both L1 and L2 in terms of singular forms of nouns. In this case, the researchers selected the data based on the language system, either English or Indonesian. After that, the researchers described and compared the data based on their category either countable or non-countable nouns, then the researchers predicted and verified the similarities and dissimilarities between English and Indonesian singular forms of countable and non-countable nouns and finally presented and illustrated them into Tables.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research has two major kinds of data sources, namely: primary data, such as "Oxford Guide to English Grammar" by Eastwood, (2002) and "Indonesian Reference Grammar" by Sneddon, et al., (2010), as well as secondary data which were taken from other books and articles from national and international journals that something to do with the instances of English and Indonesian singular forms of countable and non-countable nouns, the similarities and as well as the dissimilarities. In this research, the researchers mentioned thirty things of English and Indonesian countable and non-countable nouns which were commonly found in the house. Based on the analysis conducted using James' theory, it was found out that there were four similarities and two dissimilarities between English and Indonesian singular forms found in the house. The four similarities were related to indefinite article, definite article, quantitative adjective and units of measurement, and the two

dissimilarities were in indefinite article and definite articles. Furthermore, the instances of English and Indonesian singular forms of countable and uncountable nouns were presented in Table 1.

Table 1. English Singular Forms in Countable and Non-countable Nouns

English Countable and Non-countable Nouns	
Countable Nouns	*Non-countable Nouns*
Book	Money
Pen	Water
Pencil	Cheese
Fan	Garbage
Ruler	Bread
Oven	Furniture
Apron	Jam
Eraser	milk
Uniform	Tea
Spoon	Coffee
Fork	Rice
Chair	Sugar
Picture	Oil
Refrigerator	Flour
Table	Soap
Cabinet	Butter
Door	Sauce
Window	Beef
TV	Air
Toy	Chocolate
Cupboard	Cotton
Clock	Food
Motor	Fruit
Car	Juice
Broom	Honey
Mop	Ice
Box	Cream
Bag	Salt
Carpet	electricity
calendar, etc.	meat, etc.

Table 1 shows thirty instances of English Singular forms in terms of countable and non-countable nouns. To indicate singular thing for countable nouns, it is usually preceded with indefinite articles "a" and "an". When the initial letters of the words are pronounced in vowel sounds as in /a/, /i/, /u/, /e/, /o/, it must be preceded with "an", such as "an oven", "an eraser" and "an apron". Not "a oven", a eraser" and "a apron". On the other side, when the initial letters of the words are pronounced in consonant sounds as in "/b/, /d/, /f/, /k/, /t/, etc., such as "a book", "a doll", "a fan", "a cabinet" and, "a toy".

In addition, quantitative adjective "one" and definite article "the" and "that" can also indicate that the things are singular, like "one pen", "the car" and "that broom". yet, to indicate singular

things for non-countable nouns, there must be certain expressions used, such as "a bar of", "a pair of", "a pail of" and "a cone of", as in "a bar of chocolate", "a pair of glasses", "a pail of water" and "a cone of ice cream".

Other singular things for countable and non-countable nouns are also found in Bahasa Indonesia. To be vivid, Table 2 was illustrated.

Table 2. Indonesian Singular Forms in Countable and Non-countable Nouns

Indonesian Countable and Non-countable Nouns	
Countable Nouns	*Non-countable Nouns*
Buku	Uang
Pena	Air
Pensil	Keju
kipas angina	Sampah
Penggaris	Roti
Oven	perabotan rumah
Celemek	Perlengkapan
Penghapus	Susu
Seragam	The
Sendok	Kopi
Garpu	Nasi
Kursi	Gula
Foto	Minyak
lemari es	Tepung
Meja	Sabun
Boneka	Mentega
Pintu	Deterjen
Jendela	daging sapi
TV	Udara
Mainan	Coklat
lemari pakaian	Kapas
jam dinding	Makanan
Motor	Buah
Mobil	Jus
Sapu	Madu
Pengepel	Es
Kotak	Sandal
Tas	Garam
Kertas	listrik
kucing, etc.	daging, etc.

Table 2 shows thirty instances of Indonesian Singular forms in terms of countable and non-countable nouns. To indicate singular thing for countable nouns, it is usually preceded with indefinite article "sebuah" and "seekor" as in "sebuah buku", and "seekor kucing". additionally, quantitative adjective "satu" and definite article "itu" can also indicate that the things are singular, like "satu pena", "mainan itu". yet, to indicate singular things for non-countable nouns, there must be certain

expressions used, such as "selembar", "sepasang", "seember" and " sebatang", as in "selembar kertas", "sepasang sandal", "seember air" and "sebatang coklat".

Furthermore, there were four similarities and two dissimilarities found between English and Indonesian singular forms in terms of countable and non-countable nouns. The first similarity occurred in indefinite articles. To be obvious, Table 3 was stated.

Table 3. The Similarity between English and Indonesian Singular Forms in Indefinite Articles

English and Indonesian Singular Forms	
a box	sebuah kotak
a doll	sebuah boneka
a lamp	sebuah lampu
a broom	sebuah sapu
a cat	seekor kucing
a fish	seekor ikan
an oven	sebuah oven
an eraser	sebuah penghapus
an omelet	sebuah telur dadar
an apron	sebuah celemek

Table 3 shows ten instances of the similarity between English and Indonesian singular forms in indefinite articles. In this case, English definite articles "a" or "an" used to indicate the things are singular as it is in Bahasa Indonesia, "sebuah" and "seekor". In other words, both English and Indonesian indefinite articles have the same meanings such as "a broom" and "a fish" which mean "sebuah sapu" and "seekor ikan". Another similarity between English and Indonesian singular forms occurred in definite articles. To be clear, Table 4 was stated.

Table 4. The Similarity between English and Indonesian Singular Forms in Definite Articles

English and Indonesian Singular Forms	
the picture	gambar itu
the door	pintu itu
the bag	tas itu
the cat	kucing itu
the furniture	perabotan itu
that house	rumah itu
that car	mobil itu
that window	jendela itu
that book	buku itu
that pencil	pensil itu

Table 4 shows ten instances of the similarity between English and Indonesian singular forms in definite articles. In this case, English definite articles "the" or "that" used to indicate the things are singular as it is in Bahasa Indonesia, "itu". In other words, both English and Indonesian definite articles have the same meanings such as "the door" and "that pencil" which mean "pintu itu" and "pensil itu". Another similarity between English and Indonesian singular forms occurred in quantitative adjective. To be clear, Table 5 was illustrated.

Table 5. The Similarity between English and Indonesian Singular Forms in Quantitative Adjective

English and Indonesian Singular Forms	
one bag	satu tas
one book	satu buku
one pen	satu pena
one pencil	satu pensil
one motor	satu motor
one eraser	satu penghapus
one fan	satu kipas angina
one doll	satu boneka
one lamp	satu lampu
one window	satu jendela

Table 5 shows ten instances of the similarity between English and Indonesian singular forms in quantitative adjectives. In this case, English quantitative adjective "one" used to indicate the things are singular as it is in Bahasa Indonesia, "satu". In other words, both English and Indonesian quantitative adjectives have the same meanings such as "one lamp" and "one motor" which mean "satu lampu" and "satu motor". Another similarity between English and Indonesian singular forms occurred in units of measurement. To be clear, Table 6 was illustrated.

Table 6. The Similarity between English and Indonesian Singular Forms in Units of Measurement

English and Indonesian Singular Forms	
a bar of chocolate	sebatang coklat
a glass of water	segelas air
a cup of coffee	secangkir kopi
a bowl of rice	semangkok nasi
a pair of sandals	sepasang sandal
a piece of cheese	sepotong keju
a drop of sauce	setumpah saus
a jar of jam	sebotol selai
a can of butter	sekaleng mentega
a spoon of sugar	sesendok gula

Table 6 shows ten instances of the similarity between English and Indonesian singular forms in units of measurement. In this case, English units of measurement such as "a piece of cheese", "a jar of jam", "a bowl of rice" and "a can of butter" used to indicate the things of non-countable nouns are singular, like in Bahasa Indonesia "sepotong keju", "sebotol selai". "semangkok nasi", "sekaleng mentega". Besides, there were also dissimilarities between English and Indonesian singular forms. The first similarity between English and Indonesian singular forms occurred in the indefinite article. To be clear, Table 7 was presented.

Table 7 shows the dissimilarity between English and Indonesian singular forms in indefinite articles. In this research, English has such kind of rule of using "a" or "an" depending on the initial sound of the first letter of nouns. In other words, if it is sounded in vowels, it must use "an" but if it is sounded in consonants, it must use "a", not in Bahasa Indonesia. Another dissimilarity between English and Indonesian singular forms in definite articles. To be clear, Table 8 was described.

Table 7. The Dissimilarity between English and Indonesian Singular Forms in Indefinite Articles

English Singular Forms	Indonesian Singular Forms
English singular forms in indefinite articles "a" or "an" has regulation in sentence building. If the first letter sounded in vowels, the things must be preceded with "an" and if the first letter sounded in consonants, the things must be preceded with "a". such as "a pen" and "an oven"	Indonesian singular forms in indefinite articles "sebuah" or "seekor" has no such regulation in sentence building like in English. Whatever the first letter sounded either in vowels or consonants, it can be used to indicate singular thing, such as "sebuah buku" and "seekor ayam"

Table 8. The Dissimilarity between English and Indonesian Singular Forms in Definite Articles

English Singular Forms	Indonesian Singular Forms
English singular forms in definite articles have something to do with two articles "the" and "that" as in "the book" and "that book"	Indonesian singular forms in definite articles have something to do with one article "itu" and "that" as in "buku itu".

Table 8 shows the dissimilarity between English and Indonesian singular forms in definite articles. In this research, English has two articles used "the" and "that" as in "the book" and "that book". Yet, Bahasa Indonesia has one definite article "itu" as in "buku itu".

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussions described previously, the researchers presume that it is crucial to draw some conclusions. In this case, the researchers found that there were four similarities and two dissimilarities between English and Indonesian singular forms related to countable and non-countable nouns. The four similarities were in indefinite articles, definite articles, quantitative adjectives, and units of measurement. While the two dissimilarities were in the indefinite article and definite article. The possible learning difficulties faced by students learning English and Indonesian singular forms were that they were not very familiar with grammar rules and they tended to be perplexed and made mistakes when using English and Indonesian singular forms of countable and non-countable nouns, either in writing or speaking.

On the other side, the differences between English and Indonesian singular forms make recommendations or contributions to English teachers in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) in terms of guidance for teaching grammar that enables English teachers to design better teaching material on singular forms of countable and non-countable nouns. In addition, there are some rules of singular forms that must be pondered by students as applying English and Indonesian countable and non-countable nouns regarding on the first letter of the nouns and English articles which are much more simple than Indonesian articles. In conclusion, the results of this research hopefully can be used as raw materials that have no direct use in the classroom activity in providing complementary materials for the teaching of grammar and it should be reiterated that neither all differences cause problems, nor all problems happen because of the dissimilarities.

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