

An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Writing Descriptive Paragraph

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Abstract:

This study analyzed the students' difficulties in writing descriptive text through vocabulary, grammatical error, and unorganized writing problems. This study conducted a case study as qualitative research on students in 3rd grade at SMPN 1 Kuta Panjang Gayo Lues. The sample consisted of 10 students by using purposive sampling. This study used observation and interview methods. The students write a descriptive text according to the topic given by the researcher. Then, the researcher categorized and analyzed the students' work. The result of the study showed that the students' ability to write descriptive paragraphs is still low, and they face some difficulties in learning English.

Keywords: *writing, students, difficulties, descriptive paragraph*

INTRODUCTION

English has become more significant in this age of globalization. English will be taught in English has become more significant in this age of globalization. English will be taught in schools as the first foreign language, the Indonesian government has agreed. Unquestionably, English is important. Learning English will make it easy to interact with people from all over the world for the sake of research, thought exchange, introductions, and other activities.

English has successfully encouraged interest in learning among Indonesians as one of the most widely spoken languages. Reading, speaking, writing, and listening are the four formal skills required for learning English. The focus of the researcher in this study is on the writing difficulties of the students.

Writing is important for language learners. Writing is referred to as the expression of language through letters, symbols, or words (Daulay, 2016). The majority of students in the classroom think writing is challenging. It is due to the importance of certain writing components like grammar, spelling, punctuation, and vocabulary (Ismayanti, 2020).

Producing a text can be difficult for children, even more so for junior high school students who are also learning how to write other kinds of text, one of which is descriptive text. Students should focus more on the specifics in order to describe it with the proper structure.

The three basic characteristics that make writing difficult (organization and mechanics) are cognitive challenges, psychology's emphasis on content, and linguistics' emphasis on language use and vocabulary. Meanwhile, the problems in linguistics are grammar, language use, and sentence choice. Because English is a foreign language for students, they are confused about how to produce even one simple descriptive paragraph.

In Indonesia, learning descriptive texts is part of the English language curriculum. It is taught in junior high school, beginning with seventh grade students. Descriptive is a text that contains a clear description of something. In fact, not all students are able to write a descriptive text appropriately according to the existing elements of a descriptive text. Even though teachers of English already have a good method of teaching the topics, sometimes the students still find it difficult to write a text.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested in analyzing the difficulty faced by the students when writing descriptive text. The researcher should analyze these challenges because the findings can be applied to have introspective discussions with students and teachers about how to improve these abilities, particularly when it comes to generating descriptive texts. Teachers can develop strategies to prevent learners from having many learning challenges by enhancing existing teaching techniques or introducing more creative approaches than they have in the past. A study named "An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Writing Descriptive Text at SMPN 1 Kuta Panjang Gayo Lues" was subsequently carried out by the researcher.

In this research, the researcher conducted a study to solve the questions of how the ability of the students in writing descriptive text is and what the difficulties the students' face during the writing process are.

Writing Skill: One of the keys to English skills is writing ability. It is one of the abilities students need to develop. Experts claim that writing is both a process and a product. The writing process involves coming up with ideas that can be written about, and the final product is a written description of an idea. Writing was done with the goal of expressing the conclusions of one's own reflections, or it was done in response to requests from others. However, because English differs from Indonesian in terms of structure, spelling, and grammar, it is thought that English writing is challenging for foreign learners. Writing is the hardest skill for second language learners to master, claim Richard and Renandya (2002). It might be difficult to translate ideas into understandable language in addition to coming up with and arranging ideas. One could draw the conclusion that writing is one of the English

skills that students find difficult to learn. This challenge arose because writing, which is a foreign language, has its own categories and qualities that are distinct from those of spoken language. Students are required to organize their ideas and thoughts into strong paragraphs when writing.

Every stage of life, from elementary school through college and beyond, depends on writing. The kids are given the opportunity to express themselves, grow in their creativity and critical thinking abilities, and develop self-confidence. Writing is a complicated activity that requires the use of numerous different procedures and techniques. The three basic steps in writing are: organizing what to say and how to say it; turning an idea into written language; and reviewing to improve existing content.

The three aspects of planning include setting goals, producing ideas, and organizing ideas into a written plan. The authors create many drafts of works, plan them, and revise them. It is common knowledge that some of the language used to describe these processes has made its way into more fundamental daily tasks (Swanson et al., n.d).

Every time you write, there is a purpose behind it. Even if it's just a brief message, there is a purpose for texting. Knowing your intended audience will help you decide what to write about, how to organize your thoughts, and how to stay on topic while you write (Langan & Winstanley, 2014). Essays and paragraphs can be written in a number of styles, according to Welch (2017). The goals, the content to be communicated, and the impact the writer wants to make on the reader can all be taken into consideration while choosing a type. Narrative text, recount text, descriptive text, expository text, and persuasive text are the five main types of writing.

There are some types of paragraphs that are taught in school. One of them is a descriptive paragraph. According to Anderson and Anderson (2003:26), descriptive text describes a particular person, place, or thing. It means that descriptive text is designed especially for a person, a place, or things. They also stated descriptive text to tell about the subject by describing its features without including personal opinions. A description reproduces how things look, smell, and sound. As with other genres, this literature teaches students about social function, generic structure, and lexicogrammatical features (Mardiyah et al., 2013).

The process of characterizing is performed by categorizing them, dealing with their attributes, behaviors, functions, and other aspects in a clear order, starting with their names. As a result, the writer's subject matter can be seen by readers and listeners as if they were there (Noprianto, 2017). In addition to its schematic structure, descriptive writing has a unique linguistic feature. Language components of a descriptive narrative include the inclusion of identifiable individuals, the present tense, linking verbs, adjectives, and relational and material processes (Yoandita, 2019).

The majority of students in class think writing is challenging. Farooq (2012) asserts that writing requires a number of essential components, such as vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and vocabulary.

Writing grammar correctly, developing paragraphs logically, and using good sentence structure are the most difficult components of writing. Grammar skills include using run-on sentences, fragments, and jargon, as well as important information, a variety of sentence patterns, subject-verb agreement, modifier placement, tense agreement, and parallel construction. Grammar is a living, breathing linguistic system rather than merely a set of rules. On the other hand, memorizing rules is worse than actually following them, so learning grammar can be laborious. Normal students can build tenses, but they frequently have problems using them in written language. For students, combining two complete sentences might be challenging.

Daulay (2015) asserts that nearly all of our actions are significantly influenced by the words we use. In whatever type of work we undertake, we must be able to swiftly understand the meaning of spoken and written plans, directions, information, and recommendations. The phrase "vocabulary" describes "all the words that a person knows and uses." On the other hand, understanding a term involves more than just being able to recognize or use it. To gauge a person's level of word knowledge, many different factors are taken into consideration.

The descriptive writing genre must be understood by students when learning English. Meisuri (2013) defined a descriptive paragraph as one that vividly describes a person, place, or thing in such a way that the reader can visualize the subject and enter the writer's experience. In truth, not all pupils are able to write a descriptive paragraph correctly and in accordance with the existing elements of the descriptive text. Sometimes, English teachers had previously applied a wonderful method to teaching the students on the subject, but in fact, they still found it difficult to compose descriptive paragraphs. Consequently, the majority of students struggled to give precise descriptions of objects. According to the syllabus, the pupils had to be able to produce a descriptive text when they took the senior high school entrance exam. Even though both types of texts were taught to first-year students in senior high school, reality suggests that descriptive texts' generic structure is simpler than that of other texts, such as narrative texts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study also discussed and compared the research findings of the previous study on this topic. The first one, the current study, is compared with Rahma (2017). The purpose of the study was to analyze the students' ability to use noun phrases in writing descriptive paragraphs. It was different with the current study in that the researcher classified the students' abilities in mastering vocabulary, grammar used, and the organization of the idea.

Second, the study by Wahyumi (2019) discussed students difficulties in writing descriptive paragraphs. She examined the data using a quantitative approach. She stated that students' English ability in writing is at a very low level and includes it in poor criteria. She used some criteria, such as excellent, good, average, and poor. In this study, the researcher focused on the students' difficulties in writing descriptive paragraphs through their works given by the researcher.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study pursued a qualitative descriptive strategy. The researcher tried to analyze how the ability of students to write is descriptive and what the problems they feel are challenging, so they feel difficult in the process of writing. The data for this study was taken from the students' work about descriptive text in the third grade of SMPN 1 Kutapanjang and the interview with the students and their English teacher.

The purpose of a qualitative strategy is to analyze the source of the event being investigated. As a result, gathering data requires conducting a limited number of focused, open-ended interviews with individuals or groups. In qualitative descriptive research, the data is fully driven by the progress of the investigation (Lambert & Lambert, 2013).

The population of this study was the 3rd grade students of SMPN 1 Kuta Panjang. The sample for this study was one class, namely third grade students, by using purposive sampling techniques.

There are some processes in data analysis, namely data collection, data reduction, data analysis, and conclusion. Data collection includes collecting data through observation and interviews. The data collection process was done in several steps. First, the researcher gives the test to the students to write two paragraphs of descriptive paragraphs about their family in 60 minutes.

Data reduction is the process of choosing, concentrating, abstracting, and transforming raw data that is already present in the field. After collecting the students' work, the researcher chooses those that demonstrate the students' difficulty in creating a descriptive paragraph, which are then examined by the researcher. Next, the researcher groups the students who have difficulties and asks them to determine the reason they feel it is difficult to produce a descriptive paragraph. Then, the researcher analyzed it using an analytical scoring rubric adapted from Brown (2007). Last, the researcher conducted an interview with the students and English teacher about their difficulties.

Data analysis, the researcher examined at the students' worksheets on descriptive text to find out what challenges they encounter when writing the texts, as well as the students' responses to the interview questions to identify the factors that lead to these challenges. Last, the researcher comes to the conclusion that the researcher must understand and be responsive to the cause and effect of student difficulties in writing paragraph descriptive.

FINDINGS

The findings of this study showed that the students' ability to write descriptive paragraphs was categorized as low. The researcher presented the data based on students' writing documents to learn about the most common challenges in creating descriptive prose. It included four challenges, including content, vocabulary, and grammar.

In this study, the researcher focused on the students' difficulties in the process of writing descriptive paragraph. The researcher conducted the observation with the third-grade

students during English class. Based on the observation, the researcher assumed that the students feel difficult to produce a text even in a simple topic.

Through their writing, the researcher classified 10 students who were writing documents. After analyzing the students' work, it showed that the students feel difficult to create a good descriptive paragraph. To analyze the most dominant factors contributing to their difficulties, the researcher shows the data according to the students' work. It consisted of three factors: content, vocabulary, and grammatical errors.

Table: 1 The finding category of students' difficulties in writing descriptive paragraph

| No | Names | Content | Vocabulary | Grammar | Total |
|----|---------|---------|------------|---------|-------|
| 1 | A.S | 3 | 2 | 2 | 7 |
| 2 | E. B. S | 4 | 3 | 2 | 9 |
| 3 | G.M.S | 4 | 4 | 3 | 11 |
| 4 | K.P | 3 | 3 | 3 | 9 |
| 5 | P.R | 4 | 4 | 2 | 10 |
| 6 | P.S | 4 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| 7 | S.N | 2 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| 8 | T.H | 3 | 3 | 3 | 9 |
| 9 | Y.A.R | 3 | 2 | 2 | 7 |
| 10 | Z.Z | 2 | 2 | 3 | 7 |

It means that the content does not showed the knowledge of subject. Furthermore, the students are also still confused about how to put their ideas into a good organization. In vocabulary evaluation, the students had less vocabularies so they confused and do not have enough vocabulary to create a good descriptive paragraph. In grammatical context, the students had many grammatical errors. Most of them made mistakes in using the subject and verb correctly in a sentence.

DISCUSSION

Because first and second languages differ, inadequate language comprehension can occasionally make L2 language writing inefficient, according to Silva (1993). It means that a native language affects the mastery of a foreign language. As for Acehnese students, especially from rural area, their first language is their local language and their second language is Indonesian. English language, somehow, is their third language or foreign language. Therefore, they feel difficult to understand and to write in English.

Writing skill is an action to formulate and organize ideas into the correct words. It needs some steps to be considered by the students such as planning, organizing, drafting, revising and editing, so that the paragraph will be understood by the reader. Most students consider writing is the most difficult subject to learn. They assume that they need to master many skills to produce a good sentence.

There are some genres of paragraph taught in Junior high school. Those are descriptive, recount, narrative, procedure, explanation, discussion, exposition, news items, information report, anecdote and review. The researcher focused on descriptive paragraph because it was the first and the easiest genre considered for Junior High School students.

Descriptive text is a text that explains about how to describe person, things, place, moments, or other objects with clear explanation. It has simple characteristics such as generic structure which consist of description and identification. It also has language features, there are:

- a. Use of a particular noun
- b. Use of detailed noun groups to explain information about the subject
- c. Use of adjectives
- d. Use of relating verbs
- e. Use of thinking and feeling verb to express the subject or to give insight into the subjects thought and feeling
- f. Use of action verb

The researcher assumed that descriptive is the easiest writing paragraph taught in junior high school. It is also the most important and very basic text learned by students. In this study, the researcher analyzed the students' ability and difficulties in writing descriptive text in order to help us diagnose students' learning foreign language problems.

The aim of this study is to find out the answers to the research questions. To answer the first question, it is about how the ability of students to write descriptive text is. The question can be explained by the results of the test given. The result shows that the students' abilities were low and needed more improvement.

Moreover, to answer the second question which is about what are the difficulties of students in writing descriptive paragraph, the researcher analyzed it through some aspects that students feel difficult in the process of writing paragraph. The difficulties are unorganized idea, lack of vocabularies and many grammatical errors.

The researcher discovered that certain students had written their paragraphs with sufficient details to be used as descriptive text after evaluating the data based on the writings of the students. The student was asked to describe their family, including the number of members and the ages of their younger brother, younger sister, older brother, and older sister. One of the biggest challenges students experience while writing in English, especially in descriptive language, is vocabulary issues. It is possible to see the score from the students' writing assignment on the table. According to the interview, practically all of the students believe that because they do not use English language frequently, they find it difficult to remember it and lack of practice. They do not use English in their everyday life actively. They only study English once a week during their junior high school, so it is not surprisingly that they do not memorize vocabularies.

Students also need to pay close attention to grammar, especially when producing English-language texts. According to Abdulmajeed and Hameed (2017, referenced in Naseer, 2019), grammar is a subject with no simple answers. It is difficult and complicated. Many

students struggle when trying to use different tenses in their writing. Contrary to English sentences, a sentence in Indonesian can exist without a time signal. Grammar is one of the main challenges students confront when writing descriptive texts.

CONCLUSION

The researcher concluded that the students' ability in writing descriptive paragraph is still in low level. It caused by some factors there are unorganized content, lack of vocabularies, and many grammatical errors. According to the result of the study, the researcher suggests that the English teacher should give more exercises on writing skills based on generic structure and more explanations about basic grammar. Teacher also should give the students time to memorize the vocabularies and read a grammar book to improve their ability in writing skill. The researcher then makes the suggestion that a study be conducted in the future to examine additional textual genres using different methods of analysis. The findings of this study can be used as references for future researchers using various techniques.

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