

The Difficulties in Writing Descriptive Text Faced by the Eighth Grade Students of SMP Negeri 7 Palangka Raya

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Abstract

The research was conducted using descriptive qualitative method to analyze the difficulties in writing descriptive text especially in generic structure and language features, faced by the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 7 Palangka Raya. An essay test was given to 20 students of the eighth grade of SMP Negeri 7 Palangka Raya to obtain the data about their difficulties in writing descriptive text. The result concluded that there were 10 students (50%) faced the difficulties in generic structures. They sometimes did not write 'identification' or 'description', or they did not write it completely and clearly. They had difficulties to analyze them that they placed 'description' in the 'identification'. Some of them even wrote sentences which were not really related. On grammar, there were 8 students (40%) who faced difficulties and on mechanics there were 8 students (40%) who faced the difficulties. The difficulties were in using present tense 'to be', 'pronoun', and 'adjective'; and in mechanics they had difficulties in using 'capitalization' and 'punctuation', in which sometimes they forgot to capitalize the first alphabet in the beginning sentence. All of that means that they were stated as having difficulties in writing good descriptive text.

Keywords: difficulties; writing descriptive text

INTRODUCTION

Everyone uses language in spoken and written forms to be understood by others. Language is used to communicate among individuals or even nations. Language is a system of verbal symbols which is used by the members of a speech community as means of communication to interact and express their ideas, feelings and thoughts.

English is as one of languages which is commonly used in social life. Most countries in the world use English as mother tongue, second language, or foreign language. It means that English is popular as an international language. In Indonesia, English is necessary at school as one of the important compulsory subjects to be taught from Elementary School up to University level.

In learning English, the learners must be able to master the four skills of English. According to Tarigan (1984:1) English language skills has four skills such as listening,

speaking, reading and writing. Among the four skills, writing is the productive skill in the written mode and as one of the skills which is also important in learning English. Generally, writing in English is commonly a difficult activity for most students.

Shinta (2013), as cited stated that in Indonesia, many students considered writing skill in English as the difficult one. They were worried about punctuation, vocabulary, generic structure and other elements. Those problems make the students could not explore their writing ability; in which in turn might influence their writing skill.

According to the Curriculum 2013, the texts that should be studied at the eighth grade are descriptive, recount, and narrative texts. In this research the researcher chose descriptive text as the matter to be discussed. The students of SMP Negeri 7 Palangka Raya had some difficulties in developing the ideas. Some students wrote many main ideas in one paragraph; or the idea of the paragraph was still ambiguous. Sometimes, it was also found that some paragraphs were written in one sentence only. The idea of the paragraph was still not clear. The other difficulties were about how to arrange the generic structure of descriptive text correctly. They also had some difficulties in language features especially mechanics. For example, punctuation, the students did not know how to put punctuation in appropriate position. They also had limited vocabulary and they could not transfer their ideas because they did not have enough vocabulary in English.

Based on the background above, the researcher was interested in analyzing students' difficulties in writing descriptive text faced by the eighth grade of SMP Negeri 7 Palangka Raya.

METHOD

Research was descriptive research following Toendan (2015:151) who stated that research involving the collection of data for the purpose of describing existing conditions is called descriptive research. Descriptive research method can be used to collect the real situation at the time of the research. It means that descriptive research method is about describing how reality is and should be, that there is no administration or control of treatment as found in experimental study. The data were firstly collected, described and finally analyzed on the actual matters that were observed. In this research, the data were the students' difficulties in writing descriptive text.

Procedure of Research

SMP Negeri 7 Palangka Raya was chosen as the setting of the research. It is located at Jl. Matal, Kereng Bangkirai. The subjects were 20 students of the Eighth grade (VIII – 1) of SMP Negeri 7 Palangka Raya.

In conducting the research, the researcher followed general procedures as follows: (1) determining the research problem: What are the difficulties in writing descriptive text faced by the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 7 Palangka Raya?, (2) developing

research instruments: essay test and questionnaire, (3) collecting the data: asking the students to do the essay test of writing a descriptive text and distributing a questionnaire at the end of the test to get the supporting data, (4) checking the data from the students' answer sheets, (5) processing and analyzing the data: scoring and calculating the scores of the result of students' essay test based on the scoring rubric and tabulating the data into a table. It has been agreed that the students who got score 1 and 2 on each of the aspects of writing descriptive text were determined as having difficulties in writing descriptive text.

FINDINGS

After checking the students' answer sheets, the data were processed and analyzed. Out of 20 students as the subject of the research, 2 of them were absent that the available data were from 18 students. The description of the data is presented as in the following table.

Table 1. Description of Students' Scores in Writing Descriptive Text

No.	Student's Code	Generic Structure	Language Features		Total Score
			Grammar	Mechanics	
1	A1	2	3	3	67
2	A2	2	2	2	50
3	A3	1	2	1	33
4	A4	3	3	3	75
5	A5	1	2	2	42
6	A6	3	3	4	83
7	A7	3	3	3	75
8	A8	3	3	3	75
9	A9	3	3	3	75
10	A10	3	3	3	75
11	A11	2	1	1	33
12	A12	4	3	4	92
13	A13	2	3	2	58
14	A14	2	2	3	58
15	A15	4	3	3	83
16	A16	3	2	2	58
17	A17	3	2	2	58
18	A18	1	3	3	58
19	A19	3	2	3	67
20	A20	2	3	2	58
Σ Average		2.45	2.55	2.6	63.25

After obtaining the students' scores in writing descriptive text, the researcher calculated the percentage of the difficulties based on the students' scores and put the results in the table below. As stated previously, the students who got score 1 and 2 were categorized as having difficulties in writing descriptive text.

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage of Students Difficulties in Each Score in Writing Descriptive Text

Aspects		Score			
		4	3	2	1
Generic structure		2 (10%)	9 (45%)	6 (30%)	3 (15%)
Language Feature:	Grammar	-	12 (60%)	7 (35%)	1 (5%)
	Mechanics	2 (10%)	10 (50%)	6 (30%)	2 (10%)

Based on the table above, it could be concluded that:

1. For generic structure, there were 9 students who had difficulties.-The students had difficulties in formulating the identification and description as described below:
 - a. There were 2 students (10%) who inserted some major points in generic structure. In A12's worksheet, the generic structure was supported by identification (first paragraph in line 1-2), description (second paragraph in line 3-5),
 - b. There were 9 (45%) students who got score 3 who also inserted some major points of the text supported by identification and description. In identification, their generic structure was completed with specific participant,
 - c. There were 6 students (30%) who got score 2 who inserted some major points of the text supported by identification and description but less relevant detail of the content. In A13's student worksheet which got 2, the identification and description were not complete.
 - d. There were 3 students (15%) who got score 1 who inserted some major points of the text that are supported by identification and description but less relevant detail of content. In A3's worksheet there was no identification and description.
2. For language features
 - a. For grammar there were 8 students (40%) who had difficulties in using simple presents tense and adjective as described below:
 1. There were 12 students (60%) who got score 3 and they mostly completed with minor error in simple present tense and adjective,
 2. There were 7 students (35%) who got score 2 and had frequent errors of simple present tense and adjective. A2's worksheet who got 2, it was found some difficulties such as in line 1, for example: "Mother old is 35 year" it should be "my mother's age is 35 years old",
 3. There was 1 student (5%) who got score 1, in which his writing contained frequent grammatical inaccuracies. The difficulties were found in bounds BE, pronoun, conjunction and misspelling in forming word class. For example, in line 1-3: I have brother, she to name Maya Sutri Andriani or panggil Maya, old 32 years, job like artis" which it should be written "I have a sister, her name is Maya Sutri Andriani or called Maya, my sister's age is 32 years old and her job is an artist",

4. For mechanics there were 8 (40%) students who had difficulties in capitalization and punctuation as described below:
 - There were 2 students (10%) who got score 4 used capitalization and punctuation correctly.
 - There were 10 students (50%) who got 3 had occasional errors of capitalization and punctuation,
 - There were 6 students (30%) who got score 2 had frequent errors of capitalization and punctuation. In A5's worksheet, for example, she/he wrote "I have a cousin, his Name is gabriel" it should be written "I have a cousin, his name is Gabriel". She/he wrote capitalization in the middle of the sentences and did not write the name with a capital letter,

There were 2 students (10%) who got 1 had errors capitalization and punctuation. This is shown in A 11's worksheet, she/he did not use capitalization for the first word of the sentences, she/he also did not write full stop at the end of a sentence, and she/he did not write the name with a capital letter "maya sutri ANDRIANI" it should be "Maya Sutri Andriani"

DISCUSSION

Based on the result of the research, discussion on the difficulties in writing descriptive text faced by the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 7 Palangka Raya is as follows:

1. On the generic structure, it could be seen that the generic structure was as the majority of students' difficulties in writing descriptive text. The students sometimes did not write identification or they did not write it completely and clearly and they had difficulties to analyze identification and description, so the students placed description in the identification. Some of them wrote the sentences that were not really connected to each other. As Dadi (2015:25) states, identification in descriptive text identifies the described phenomenon which consists of topic about what is going to be described visually or mentally. As also stated by Pardiyono (2013:43), identification consists one or more sentences, or one short paragraph, with the characteristics of having a topic which answers "who" or "what" questions. In this research, the students sometimes did not write the identification in the first paragraph but they combined in between some sentences. In the description, the students did not describe the specific participant in detail as suggested by Dadi (2015:25) that description describes parts, qualities, and characteristics; description contains an explanation, for example: picture of the mentioned thing. As also stated by Pardiyono (2013:44) description may contain one or more short paragraphs depending on the requirement. In the description, the students had to describe about physics, quality, character, or attitude about the specific participant but they did not write it completely and clearly. Based on explanation above the students had difficulties to analyze the identification and description, due to the fact that they rarely paid attention to generic structure in writing descriptive text.

2. On language features (grammar and mechanics), it could be seen that grammar was the major students' difficulties in writing descriptive text. It seems that students forgot that in writing descriptive text, simple present tense should be used; or they were slightly wrong to use pronoun and BE form. For example, "my grandmother was 90 years old" it should "my grandmother's age is 90 years old". Bryne (1988) divided the problems that make writing difficult into three categories. The first is Linguistic Difficulty. Linguistics aspect like grammar, vocabulary, language use and choice of sentence in writing must have fully monitoring. The second is Physiology Difficulty, which more focuses on the writer's difficulty because there aren't direct interaction and feedback from the reader when they are writing. This difficulty more focuses on difficulty in develop written material or content of composition. The third is cognitive difficulty. Writing has to be thought formal instruction like spelling, punctuation, capitalization and paragraphing. Referring to the explanation above, the research results showed that the students had difficulties in using present tense, to be, pronoun, adjective, because of these things they were difficult to write a good descriptive text. In mechanics they had difficulties in using capitalization and punctuation, sometimes they forgot to use the capitalization when they wrote in the beginning of writing descriptive text because the students rarely paid attention on mechanics.
3. Another difficulty that the students had was the difficulty to develop idea when they were writing descriptive text. Lack of vocabulary was also a difficulty for them to write descriptive text.

All of the above results were strengthened by a research of Nurhayati (2013) who analyzed the difficulties in writing descriptive text about content, organization, vocabulary, mechanics, and grammar. Of the five aspects above, it was analyzed that grammar was the most difficulty the students faced.

CONCLUSION

The eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 7 Palangka Raya had difficulties in writing descriptive in terms of generic structure and language features (grammar, mechanics). From the result of the research discussed previously, the conclusion of the research is presented as follows:

1. Generic Structure: In the students' worksheet, there were 9 students (45%) out of 20 students had difficulties in generic structure.
2. Language Features: In the students' worksheet, there were 8 (40%) students of students had difficulties in grammar and there were 8 students (40%) out of 20 students had difficulties in mechanics.

Generally, the difficulties in writing descriptive text faced by the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 7 Palangka Raya still occurred. It could be seen most of the students had difficulties in generic structures and language features on grammar and mechanics in writing descriptive text.

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Authors' Brief CV

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