Students' Ability in Writing Descriptive Text at Eighth Grade of SMP TD Pardede Foundation Medan

Lilis J. Tamba[1], Yolani V. Situmorang[2], and Queen H. E. Ginting[3]
Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of Prima Indonesia
Prima Indonesia
Medan, Indonesia
lilistamba1998@gmail.com

Abstract: This research was aimed to know the eighth grade students of junior high school's ability in writing descriptive text at SMP TD Pardede Foundation Medan. The design of the research was descriptive quantitative. The object of this research was the score of 23 students in their descriptive text assignment. The method that was used consists of writing assignments, collecting data, and analyzing the data by putting them in certain categories. The students were asked to write a descriptive text about someone or something that they like on a piece of paper with the requirement of three paragraphs in minimum. The technique that was used for analyzing the collected data was divided into four steps: reading the result of the students' assignment, analyzing the aspects of the descriptive text, determining the score of each student, and making a conclusion based on the result of the data. The data was classified by calculating the average ability, forming categories of scores, and calculating the percentage of each category. The result of this study showed that the majority of students' ability in writing descriptive text at the eighth grade of SMP TD Pardede Foundation Medan was average. From the total of 23 students that participated in the research, 2 students were classified into poor category, 13 students were classified to average category, and 8 students were classified to good category. The most common mistakes that were faced by students are mechanism and vocabulary

Keywords*: descriptive text, eighth grade, students' ability, writing*

INTRODUCTION

Many countries have started using English as well as promoting the benefit of its use for education receivers a language to be used globally in education for several years. Almost every country has realized the importance of providing education to its citizens in English (Balan, 2011). This phenomenon is shown by the focus of many countries' governs, representatives, officials, and professionals to draw their students' attention to English as a way to improve the standard of one's living which will directly become helpful in enhancing the economy. The use of English will allow individuals to develop more professionally by a wider access in the fields of politics, science and technology, economy, arts, medicine, etc. resulting in bigger chances of gaining success for the country (Eman, 2015).

Communication is to send a message from the sender (writer or speaker) to the rec. Language serves as a means of communication. It may happen in various forms, two of them are the form of spoken and written language. People are social creatures who cannot survive without getting an interaction with others. Therefore, language was born as a way to interact each other. English is one of the language that has been used extensively. Thus, the learning process of English language skill is important for everyone, especially for students (Hariyadi et al., 2018).

The form of written language requires the skill of writing which is important in formal communication. Students in all grades have requirements to examine their English writing skills. One of the requirements for the second grade of junior high school students based on the English competence is to be able to compose proper written descriptive paragraph in simple form. According to Setiyadi (2007:7-9), writing involves the ability to shape the letters of the alphabet and the knowledge of the right combination of letters, and expressing ideas through the written words of the target language (composition). Negari (2011) stated that learning to write is not an easy task, especially for those who learn to write in a language different from their first language in academic contexts. Indonesian students do not use the English language in their daily

life, since the majority of people speak in Indonesian. In writing, students still face many difficulties related to the aspects of writings, such as lack of grammar understanding, lack of knowledge in vocabularies, confusion over the content, mechanics, and organization.

Kemendikbud (2013) stated that descriptive text is included in the English curriculum in Indonesia's education system. It is essential for teachers to know the way to compose the text ideally since the teacher is responsible for delivering the subject in the classroom and students are demanded to master it. After introducing and delivering the subject of descriptive text to the students, the teachers still have to evaluate the students' ability and understanding. This evaluation should be taken into account because it will determine the teacher's success in teaching. For that reason, diagnosing to what extent the student understand how to write the descriptive text is critical (Noprianto, 2017). After introducing and delivering the subject of descriptive text to the students, the teachers still have to evaluate the students' ability and understanding. This evaluation should be taken into account because it will determine the teacher's success in teaching. For that reason, diagnosing to what extent the students understand how to write the descriptive text is critical (Noprianto, 2017).

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Descriptive Text

Descriptive text creates a word picture of persons, places, objects, and emotions using selected details to make a specific impression on the reader. The intention of a descriptive text is to describe a particular person, place, or thing. In order to be particular and interesting, it is important to notice details that contribute to describing the subject in intemperance (Zulaikah et al.,2018). The statement by Pardiyono (2007:33-34) highlighted that written descriptive text has the specific function to give a description of an object, either human or non-human.

2.2. Writing

There are many ways to give an idea or message from one source to the others, one of them is by writing. Writing requires mastery in grammatical patterns and the rules of writing (such as organization, appropriate vocabularies, and sentence structure), making it a complex skill to tackle (Hongqin, 2014). According to Rass (2001), writers should have the ability in writing by obeying certain issues, such as content, purpose, audience, vocabularies, organization, and mechanics (punctuation, spelling, and capitalization). Furthermore, writing is a process of thinking, putting ideas down on paper, transforming thought into words, and giving them structure and coherent organization. It was noted by Myles (2002) that the ability to write well is usually learned or culturally transmitted as a set of practices in formal instructional settings (for example: school) or other environments instead of acquired naturally.

2.3. Elements of Writing a Descriptive Text

Sudarwati and Grace (2005:27) mentioned that the generic structure of descriptive text consists of two components: identification (identifying phenomenon to be described) and description (described parts, qualities, and characteristics). Meanwhile, the language features for descriptive text focus on specific participants, use of attributive and identifying process, frequently used classifiers in nominal groups, and use of simple present tense. To be able to write a descriptive text, the writer has to develop ideas first. In organizing ideas, the writer has to identify and describe the object as detailed as possible in the supporting paragraph. The writer has to use simple present tense as the appropriate grammar. In composing the text, the writer chooses the most accurate words to express the ideas by using the most suitable vocabularies. In the mechanics component; the writer should use good punctuation, spelling, and capitalization (Husna et al., 2017). The targets of teaching writing descriptive text for junior high school student are: making the students able to describe animals and people, making the students able to describe their school, and making the students able to describe places (Sudarwati and Grace, 2007 : 113-137).

2.4 Related Results

Referring to the curriculum of junior high school competency, every student I required to be able to communicate in English through spoken and written from in various texts, such as narrative text, recount text, procedure text, descriptive text, and so on. The students have to write in the right order of the generic structure and use the language features correctly. The writer has evaluated some research that are related to this paper's topic. Those researches can serve as references developing this paper and will described below.

According to the research that was done by Husna et al. (2017), students often found some difficulties in spite of the guidance by their teachers. Those difficulties consists of developing ideas, organizing the ideas, the use of grammar and vocabulary, and mechanic aspects like spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Some students write too many main ideas in one paragraph, making it ambiguous. The difficulty in organizing ideas is shown by the student's hardship in making a reasonable organization or sequence. Grammar difficulty will influence the students' way of putting together a sentence. The lack of vocabularies may cause students to be doubtful in putting their ideas and disabling them from.

Choosing the right words that match with their intention. Mechanic aspect, such as spelling, punctuation, and capitalization are important to make the sentence or paragraph readable. The difficulty in these aspects will cause students to make a contiguity meaning of the sentences or even the paragraph. This research also showed how students are lacking interest in writing, even though the topic is about them. The result of this research implied that teachers should use an effective strategy in teaching descriptive writing, teachers should choose a topic that is close to the students, the students who were categorized in poor category found difficulties in developing and organizing their ideas, and that the teachers should give the students chances to practice their skill in writing descriptive text.

The second related research was done by Zulaikah et.al.(2018), which was descriptive research. The objective of the study was to find out the use of descriptive method in analyzing the ability of students in the second semester of English Educational Program at STIKIP Nurul Huda OKU Timur in writing descriptive text. This objective was analyzed based on score classification. The highest score of 32 students in this research was 75 which could be considered at a good level. Meanwhile, the lowest results got a score of 52 which could be considered as in average level. The other students' who got the mean score ranging from 54 to 74 was also considered in average and good level. Therefore, the students' general mean score of writing descriptive text-ability was 60 which could be classified in the average level. Thus, it could be concluded that the writing descriptive text skill of the second semester of English education program in STKIP Nurul Huda was on average level.

The third related research comes from Hariyadi et al. (2018) which was the analysis of the students' ability in writing descriptive text at the tenth-grade student of SMAN 11 Jambi academic year 2017/2018. Similar to the last research, Hariyadi and his colleagues also used descriptive research with qualitative method. Random sampling was used to get the sample: 33 students in X MIPA 3. The instrument used for this research was writing test. The findings showed that the students' ability in writing descriptive text was categorized as good with 55% of the sample got score 13 to 16 and the level of students' ability was good. There were several factors that played the role in affecting students' disabilities in writing English descriptive text in SMAN 11 Jambi. First, the students found it hard to start or to end a paragraph. Second, the students faced difficulties in organizing their ideas. Third, students were confused to write and arrange the sentences into a good paragraph. Fourth, the students are lacking vocabulary, affecting the outcome of the sentence that was found repetitive and ineffective.

METHODOLOGY

The chosen design for this research was descriptive quantitative research. Descriptive quantitative design is a method in research where the data are taken once and include objective measurements by gathering numerical data, which is the score of

the assignment. The score acts as a summarization of the students' ability in writing descriptive text based on the proper use of grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation. According to Gay (2005:208), descriptive quantitative research is done by collecting numerical data as a way to answer questions about a determined topic through questionnaires, interviews, or observation. The independent variable was the data of students score and the dependent variable was the students' ability in descriptive text. The object of this study was the descriptive texts made by the eighth-grade students of SMP TD Pardede Foundation Medan. There were in total 23 students as respondents. The respondents were asked to write a descriptive text about someone or something that they like on a piece of paper with the requirement of three paragraphs in minimum. The technique that was used for analyzing the collected data was divided in four steps. First, the researcher read the result of the students' assignment. Second the researcher analyzed the aspects of the descriptive text. Third, the score of each student was determined. And fourth, the conclusion was taken based on the result of the data.

The data was classification consists of calculating the average ability, forming categories of scores, and calculating the percentage of each category. To calculate the average ability (mean), below is the formula that was used by the researchers:

Mean = $\sum x/N$

($\sum$x = The total score of students; N = Number of students)

There were three categories: good, average, and poor. To classify the students' ability into those categories, the researcher calculated the standard of deviation from the data by using this formula:

$$SD = \sqrt{\sum x2 / N} - (\sum x/N)^2$$

(SD = Standard Deviation; $\sum$x = the total score of the students; $\sum x^2$ = The total quadrat of score; N = Number of the students)

The criteria to divide the categories that was used is:

>M + 1 SD = good

(M-1SD)--(M+1SD)= average

<M – 1SD = poor

(M= Mean; SD= Standard of Deviation)

To calculate the percentage of each category, the researcher used the following formula:

P=*F/Nx100%*

(P = Percentage of students; F = The amount of the students from each category; N = The total amount of the students).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Score	Category	The amount of students	Percentage
<64,44783	Poor	2	8,70%
64,44783--74,24783	Average	13	56,52%
>74,24783	Good	8	34,78%

Table 1. The result of the students' ability in writing descriptive text

The collected data consisted of 23 results of descriptive text assignment. The highest score was 80 and the lowest was 60. The average score was 69,34 and the standard of deviation was 4,9. There were three determined categories, consisted of poor (<64,44783), average (64,44783--74,24783), and good (> 74,24783). There were 2 students (8,70%) that got into the poor category. The number of students who were categorized as average was 13 (56,52%). There were 8 students that were categorized as good (34,78%). Based on the result of the research, it can be implied that the majority of students got the average score in writing descriptive text.

The scoring was considered by the grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation usage of the students. All of the students used the present simple tense, which was the proper use of grammar in descriptive text. The use of vocabulary by students was very limited, consisting of only a short range of different word choices. The most common mistake was the use of spelling. The majority of the students still did not understand how to write the words properly. This research showed that the main difficulties for students in writing descriptive text were vocabularies and the mistakes in the mechanism will make the text hard to read or to be understood by the readers. Students could not express their ideas without a wide range of vocabularies while misspelling can change the meaning of their written ideas. Therefore, those components play important roles in making a decent descriptive text.

CONCLUSION

Descriptive text is one of the parts of the English curriculum that must be learned by students in the eighth grade of junior high school. The evaluation of students' ability in writing descriptive text may serve as a tool for future improvements to enhance the students' capability. From the result of the research, there were 23 chosen students as the sample. The collected data showed that the majority of the eighth-grade students in SMP TD Pardede foundation Medan were categorized as average in writing descriptive text. The common mistakes were misspelling and lack of vocabulary.

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