



Students' Error in Writing Descriptive Text in The Junior High School Viewed from Its Indicators

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ABSTRAK

Siswa sering melakukan kesalahan dalam menulis teks deskriptif tentang orang, hewan, benda, atau prosedur. Ketika ditanya tentang sumber kesalahan, mereka tidak memberikan jawaban yang jelas atas pertanyaan itu, apalagi penjelasan tentang sumber kesalahannya. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis jenis-jenis kesalahan yang dilakukan siswa dan mencari tahu mengapa siswa melakukan kesalahan dalam menulis teks. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif. Lima belas siswa kelas tujuh SMP menjadi subjek dalam penelitian ini. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan memberikan tes kepada siswa untuk menulis teks deskriptif tentang orang, hewan, dan prosedur, dan wawancara kelompok terarah untuk mencari tahu mengapa siswa melakukan kesalahan. Data tersebut didasarkan pada tujuh indikator dalam menulis, yaitu judul, kalimat utama, pengembangan kalimat yang signifikan, struktur kalimat, tata bahasa yang digunakan, penggunaan kata, dan penulisan, dan sepuluh sumber kesalahan yang dapat menyebabkan siswa melakukan kesalahan dalam menulis. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa siswa melakukan kesalahan dalam mendeskripsikan orang, hewan, dan prosedur pada judul, kalimat utama, pengembangan kalimat signifikan, struktur kalimat, pilihan kata, tata bahasa, dan mekanika. Sementara itu, proporsi tertinggi kesalahan siswa dalam menulis adalah ketidakpedulian siswa terhadap tulisannya.

ABSTRACT

Students often make mistakes in writing descriptive texts about people, animals, objects, or procedures. When asked about the source of the error, they did not give a clear answer to the question, let alone an explanation of the source of the error. The purpose of this study was to analyze the types of errors made by students and find out why students made mistakes in writing texts. The method used in this study is a qualitative description. Fifteen seventh-grade junior high school students were the subjects in this study. Data collection was carried out by presenting tests to students to write three descriptive texts about people, animals, and procedures, and focus group interviews on finding out why students made mistakes. The data is based on seven indicators in writing, namely the title, main sentence, significant sentence development, sentence structure, grammar used, word use, and writing, and ten sources of errors that might cause students to make mistakes in writing. This study found that students made mistakes in describing people, animals, and procedures in the title, main sentence, significant sentence development, sentence structure, word choice, grammar, and mechanics. Meanwhile, the highest proportion of students' mistakes in writing is the students' indifference to their writing.

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1. INTRODUCTION

English is an international language and is not only used for communication between countries but also to deepen and develop knowledge because most science books are imported from abroad (Y.-L. Chen & Hsu, 2020; Fachriyah, 2020; Majid et al., 2012; Sari, 2016). Speaking English is one of the essential skills for students because English has become a universal language used in the world of technology, education, politics, and commerce and is the most widely used communication tool in the world (Ahmed, 2017; Hidayati et al., 2020; Wijayanti, 2019). In a modern world full of challenges and intense competition, everyone is advised to have a high level of education and to need specific skills, which we usually call skills (Gonzalves, 2021; Khalid & Muhammad, 2012; Sirivedin et al., 2018). One of the most needed skills today is English. English is a universal language, so those who want to be in front of the general public need to master English (Metruk, 2018; Selvi et al., 2020; Setyowati & Sukmawan, 2016). The Ministry of National Education has linked the importance of teaching English for three purposes, including developing the ability to communicate in English both orally and in writing, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (Alam & Lestari, 2020; Khusniyah & Hakim, 2019; Yusnidar, 2014).

Writing is one of the four language skills taught in Junior High schools in Indonesia (Febriyanti et al.,

2017; Sadeli, 2020; Widiyanto, 2017). According to the 2013 Curriculum, the EFL learning goal is to develop the students' knowledge of text's social function, text structure, and language elements (Almuhammadi, 2020; Li, 2021). Aside from the social function, text structure, and language element, they are trained to write a text focused on its indicators, namely, writing a suitable title, writing a topic sentence, developing the topic sentence into a coherent paragraph, arranging supporting sentences coherently, constructing grammatical sentences, using appropriate words or phrases, using correct mechanics (Khatoony & Nezhadmehr, 2020; Octaberlina & Muslimin, 2020; Shahani & Tahriri, 2015). Writing is the primary basis upon which one's learning and intellect will be judged. Writing skill equips students with communication and thinking skill as well. It also fosters our ability to explain and refine our ideas to others and ourselves (Fauzan et al., 2020; Johnson, 2020). Moreover, writing gives voice to our inner thoughts and allows us to share them.

The seventh graders of Junior High School learn how to write a descriptive text in English. A descriptive text functions on describing a single location, object, event, person, or place. It endeavors to engage all five of the reader's senses to evoke the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and feel of the text's subject (Bahnar, 2021; Widyaningrum, 2018). Descriptive writing is vivid, colourful, and detailed (Ataç, 2015; Sitek et al., 2015; Yigitoglu & Reichelt, 2012). As they wrote, they usually focused on writing a suitable title, deciding on the appropriate topic sentence, developing the topic sentence into a whole paragraph, constructing grammatical sentences, arranging supporting sentences coherently, using appropriate words or phrases, and using appropriate writing mechanics (Flores, 2021; Setyaningsih & Larassati, 2021; Sun & Wang, 2020). Despite the scientific approach applied in the 2013 Curriculum, with its five stages, observation, question, exploration, association, and communication, the students still found writing a descriptive text very difficult to accomplish (Krissandi, 2018; Siregar & Dongoran, 2020). In prior observation, the students often committed errors in writing a descriptive text of a person, an animal, an object, or a procedure. When they were asked about the sources of errors, they did not give clear answers to the questions, let alone logical explanations of the sources of errors. The present research was conducted to ascertain the types and sources of errors in writing descriptive texts of a person, an animal, an object, and a procedure in Junior High School. The present research was similar to previous researches in terms of analyzing the error types and sources. Previous research was focused more on language elements rather than the seven writing indicators aforementioned.

This research was conducted in SMPN 2 Tejakula, focusing on the seven-writing indicators, namely: text's title, topic sentence, development of the topic sentence into a cohesive paragraph, arrangement of supporting sentences systematically and coherently, word or phrase usage, and writing mechanics. A text title refers to an overall text's content or its controlling theme. A topic sentence refers to the main idea or content of a paragraph. Topic sentence development refers to the enlargement of an outline paragraph or creating descriptions for the whole paragraph. Sentence arrangement refers to systematic sequences of supporting sentences into a coherent paragraph. A grammatical sentence refers to the correct application of grammatical rules in the sentences. Word usage refers to the way a word, phrase, or concept is used in a language. Writing mechanics are the conventions governing the technical aspects of writing, including spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and abbreviations. The objectives of this research were to analyze the types of errors committed by the students and find out the sources of error in writing descriptive text in SMP Negeri 2 Tejakula.

2. METHOD

The research design was Classroom Research and applied descriptive qualitative research. Classroom research is a teacher-driven activity that aims to find out what works best in the classrooms and to improve writing activities more effectively and beneficially. The purpose of the study was to analyze the types of errors committed by EFL students in writing descriptive text and also to analyze the sources of its error. The study was conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Tejakula and took seventh-grade students as the subject. The data was collected by assigning students to write three different types of a descriptive text (person, animal, and procedure). It was analyzed based on seven indicators in writing (title, topic sentence, development, arrangement, grammar, word/phrase usage, and mechanic). Then it was continued by conducting focus group interviews to find out students' reasons for committing errors in their writing. In analyzing the result of the focus group interview, the researcher used ten sources of error that might cause students' error (Inter-lingual transfer, intra-lingual transfer, context of learning, communication strategy, students' carelessness, mother tongue interference, translation of mother tongue, materials, mistake analogy, and language). There were two instruments here used by the researcher, the task's instructors, and also the interview guideline. The report of the analysis result was written after conducting data analysis.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

As stated in the first research question, the students' error types were identified in terms of writing indicators, they are, a title, a topic sentence, a development, an arrangement, four to five grammatical sentences, proper word or phrase usage, and appropriate writing mechanics. Since the students were assigned to write three different paragraphs. A descriptive text's title is usually written in a single word or a phrase in which the first letter of the word or each of the words of a phrase is/are capitalized and it summarizes the description content. A title is also meant for a description that the writer uses as a heading. A topic sentence is a sentence that addresses the topic. A topic sentence usually tells the reader what you are going to be writing about. A topic sentence must be written in a declarative, active, positive, and simple sentence.

To develop a paragraph from a topic sentence, all writers have to do is to ask the topic sentence questions. Then he/she takes the answers to these questions, and writes a paragraph out of them. Whereas, arrangement refers to the sequencing of the supporting sentences in a logical order. Constructing grammatical sentences refer to applying the correct subject-verb agreement, tense or verb form, correct singular/plural agreement, correct word form, unclear pronoun reference, correct use of articles, prepositions, and commas. Usage refers to the conventional ways in which words or phrases are used, spoken, or written. It can also refer to rules or practices in spelling and pronunciation. Finally, writing mechanics are the conventions governing the technical aspects of writing, including spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and abbreviations.

The most error committed by the students in each paragraph. In the first paragraph, about describing a person, the most error committed was grammar error with 10 numbers of error or about 12.35%. It was followed by usage error with 6 numbers of error (7.41%), error in mechanics 5 numbers of error (6.17%), error in development 13 numbers of error (4.94%), error in title 3 numbers of error (3.70%), error in topic sentence 3 numbers of error (2.47%), and there was no error found in the arrangement. Then, in the second paragraph, about describing the animals, the most error committed by the student was grammar with 10 numbers of error (12.35%), followed by usage with 6 numbers of error (7.41%). There was the same number of errors found in mechanics and title. There were 5 number of errors (6.17 %). The last found is development. It was 2 number of errors or 2.47%.

Furthermore, research question No.2 dealt with the sources of errors found in the students' writing descriptive paragraphs in *SMPN2 Tejakula*. Theoretically, there are ten possible sources of errors. Inter-lingual error is caused by the process of transfer and borrowing of students' first language to the second language. Intra-lingual error is an error caused by unfamiliar learners of the second language structure or system learned. Context of learning is an error caused by the misleading teacher in explaining the material to students. Communication strategies refer to the students' strategy in learning their second language which sometimes causes an error. In addition, there are some sources of the error made by students in writing. They are carelessness of the students, interferences of students' mother tongue, translation between students' mother tongue to another language, the students could not translate the material as what is expected by a native speaker, the analogy's mistake which might ignore the exact pattern, and the language that caused students to submit an error in their writing. The most common source of error committed by the students from those three paragraphs was students' carelessness (15 errors or 11.54%) for person description. The next source is students' carelessness 61 numbers of error (12.31%) for animal descriptive text, and the last in procedure descriptive text, the most common sources caused the students' errors were students' carelessness (13 numbers of error or 10.00%).

Discussion

Writing skills in English will be better if students master grammar (Guo & Huang, 2018; Segundo Marcos et al., 2020). The most important thing that English learners sometimes forget is vocabulary (vocabulary) (Albaladejo et al., 2018; Leona et al., 2021; Tivnan, 2015). A person already knows the structure and grammar of the sentence to be mentioned but does not know the English of the words. The importance of vocabulary (vocabulary) is to speak English fluently. Vocabulary (vocabulary) is an integral part of learning a language (R. W. Chen & Chan, 2019; Gozcu & Caganaga, 2016; Hamer & Rohimajaya, 2018). The more words that are known, the greater the ability to understand what is heard and the higher the ability to say what you want to say or write. Vocabulary is an essential part of learning a language (Kusumawati et al., 2017; Rohmatillah, 2014; Taharyanti, 2017). The more words that are known, the greater the ability to understand what is heard and the higher the ability to say what you want to say or write. There were seven types of error identified based on writing indicators, namely a title, a topic sentence, a development, an arrangement, four to five grammatical sentences, proper word or phrase usage, and appropriate writing mechanics. Based on the result of the analysis, there were lots of errors committed by the students. The table below provides an example of an error committed by the students and its sources.

<p>My friend</p> <p>In scholl, I have friend. his name rina. I go to school with rina. I like avocado and rina like strawberry. She watch cartoon everyday. I do not like cartoon</p>	<p>Problem in:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Title (My friend → My Friend) 2. Development (this text tells about Rina and author but the title is My Friend) 3. Grammar (his name rina → Her name is Rina) 4. Mechanic (rina like strawberry → Rina likes strawberry)
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As can be read, the title is not appropriate with the content of the paragraph. The paragraph describes Rina, but the title is “My friend”. The title should be written in more detail and relate to the content discussed. The appropriate title of this paragraph could be “Rina” or another which relate to Rina. The next error of the paragraph was found in the title of the text. In writing the title of the text, it must be started by a capital letter, but in this paragraph the word “friend” in the title was written without a capital letter. The grammar error was also found in the paragraph. The sentence “his name rina” has a mistake because there is no subject in the sentence. The pronoun used in the sentence is also wrong. Since the paragraph describes a girl, the pronoun should be “her”. The last error found was a mechanic error. “rina like strawberry”. The name should be started by a capital letter and because the sentence uses a third singular subject, the verb follows the subject should be added “s” or “es”. It should be “Rina likes strawberry”. There are still many students who do not understand grammar well. Grammar or grammar is a set of structural rules that govern the composition of clauses, phrases, and words in any given natural language (Almuhammadi, 2020; Simbolon & Satria, 2016; Uysal & Yavuz, 2015). The use of grammar in English is essential. Grammar can improve our writing, speaking, and interpreting English correctly and adequately even though its use is not for daily activities (Benitez-correa et al., 2019; Jean & Simard, 2013; Sharandeep & Niwas, 2016). The benefits of using grammar are developing translation techniques, helping to acquire vocabulary, increasing knowledge of actual sentence understanding, and building conceptual thinking about the structure of English (Schurz & Coumel, 2020; Su et al., 2021).

4. CONCLUSION

The first for a descriptive person, the researcher found the students errors in making title (3.70%), topic sentence (2.47%), usage (7.42%), grammar (12.35%), and mechanic (6.17%). In addition, the error found in students’ descriptive text of animals is 6.17% errors in making title, 1.23% in development, 7.41% in usage, 12.35% error in grammar, and 6.17% error in mechanics. Furthermore, the types of error in writing procedure descriptive text are error in making title (8.64%), development (1.23%), usage (8.64%), grammar error (3.70%), and the last is an error in mechanics 7.41%. Another conclusion for the sources of error is also found by the researcher. The highest source of the error found is students’ carelessness (15 errors or 11.54%) for the descriptive text of person. The next source is students’ carelessness 61 numbers of error (12.31%) for animal descriptive text, and the last in procedure descriptive text, the most common sources caused the students’ errors were students’ carelessness (13 numbers of error or 10.00%).

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