

Analysis of Students' Ability in Writing Descriptive Text (A Case Study in SMA Negeri 5 Karawang)

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 10 December 2023

Revised 13 December 2023

Accepted 20 December 2023

Available online 25 December 2023

Keywords:

ability, writing and descriptive text



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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to determine the students' ability in writing descriptive text at class X7 SMA Negeri 5 Karawang; to answer the formulation of research questions; and the writer used qualitative approach by using case study method. This study was conducted at SMA Negeri 5 Karawang and took six students of class X7 as participants. The data were collected by observation and documentation. In the documentation stage, the writer collected descriptive texts written by students and then analyzed the texts by using systemic functional linguistic (SFL). The findings of this study indicated that the students of high achievement had been able to write descriptive text well, while the students of middle and low achievement have employed the schematic structure of descriptive text, but they still made many mistakes in applying linguistic features.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the most effective ways to communicate that is needed in this modern life. There are so many communications done using writing, such as in an airport, often simple written is used to give information to passengers. Along with technology advancement in this globalization era, it will be easier for people to gain and give information through internet and social media that also provided in written form. Moreover, there are some printed materials such as magazines, newspapers and books that used as reference in education, it shows that written communication plays important roles in this modern world.

Further Tarigan (2008:9) states communication process can be conducted through three medias, these are visual (nonverbal), oral and written. Teaching writing to EFL and ESL students is not an easy thing, Grenville (2000) explains that "No one's born knowing to write-but it's a skill that most people can learn..." thus, although writing is difficult but if students have strong intention, they can learn it.

According to Rinnert and Kobayasi (Manchon, 2009: 23), the writing of EFL students is affected not only by their first language (L1), but also by the educational context here they learn to write. The same thing also expressed by Harmer (2007: 112-113) teaching writing will depend, as most other things to do, on student's age, level, learning style and interest. In addition to help students to write attractively, teachers also have to notice about genre, process in writing and building the writing habit.

Then, Levine (Diniya, 2013: 1) says that EFL and ESL students assume that writing is difficult because they don't know what to write, how to write, lacking of mastering the vocabulary, being afraid to be criticized, and avoiding difficulties when they face a topic and blank paper. The same situation also has found at SMAN 5 Karawang tenth grade, students consider that writing is difficult because of lacking of mastering vocabulary and they don't accustom writing English. The difference between English and Indonesia's grammar also becomes one of the factors that makes students confused when writing an English text.

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To facilitate students in mastering writing, descriptive text is recommended in the curriculum as a text that student of senior high school should become skilled (see 2006 Indonesia curriculum). Anderson and Anderson (1998: 26) states that descriptive text is text that describes a particular person, place or things. Its purpose is to tell about subject by describing its features without including personal opinions.

Referring to those elaborations, this study focuses on analyzing students' ability in writing descriptive text using systemic functional linguistic at SMAN 5 Karawang. This study also attempts to help teacher asses more accurately on what treatments will be necessary for ESL/EFL students in learning writing to improve students' writing skill.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Writing

Writing is process where the writer derives graphic symbols which describe a language that is understood by the other ones, so that the graphic symbols can be read by people who comprehended the language (Tarigan, 2008: 22). In writing, students learn several types of texts or genre. Harmer (2004: 86) points out writing is a process that often heavily influence by the constrains of genres, and then these elements have to be presented in learning activities. Therefore, it can be drawn that it's important for students to know what genre they write in order to be appropriate for their need and they can understand the functions of every genre.

Tarigan (2008: 24-25) has assumption that the definition of writing objective is 'response' that is expected by writer from the readers. Further, Grenville (2001: 1) mentions that the aim of writing will be trying to do at least one of the following things:

1. Entertain—it doesn't necessarily make the readers laugh, but it at least engages their feelings in some way.
2. Inform—it tells the reader about something.
3. Persuade—it tries to convince the reader of something.

According to Harmer (2004: 5) writing process has four main elements, these are:

1. planning. There are three main issues that should be noticed by writers in this stage. Firstly, they have to consider the purpose of their writing, they have to decide the type of text and the information they want to write. Secondly, audience also becomes essential thing to be thought by the writers, because it will influence the choice of language and the shape of writing. Thirdly, the writers have to consider the content structure of the text.
2. Drafting. After making plan, the writer should make a draft. Draft is the first version of a piece of writing.
3. Editing. In this stage the writers will read and see the draft to check perhaps the order of information is not clear or the way something is written is ambiguous. In the editing process other readers or editors often help to comment and give some suggestions.
4. Final version. After making the changes to the draft, and then the writers produce final version that is different from the first draft. Now the writers are ready to send the written text to the audience.

2. Descriptive Text

Descriptive text is a text which has function to describe particular person, place or thing (Gerot and Wignell, 1994: 208). In addition, Anderson and Anderson (1998: 26) states that descriptive text is text that describes a particular person, place or things. Its purpose is to tell about subject by describing its features without including personal opinions.

The schematic structure of descriptive text as argued by Anderson and Anderson (1998); Derewianka (2004); Gerot&Wignell (1994); But, et all (2000); Pardiyono (2007); Siahaan and

Shinoda (2007); Calaghan and Rothery (1998) include: Identification and Description. Identification identifies phenomenon, while description describes parts, qualities and characteristics.

Beside its structure, another aspect of descriptive text is linguistic features. Linguistic features of descriptive text are: using specific participant, adjective, linking verb, relational and material process. (Source: Anderson and Anderson (1998: 27))

3. Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL)

Systemic functional linguistic is first introduced by Michael Halliday in 1985. SFL views language as a resource for making meaning, whereas grammar is a resource for creating meaning by means of wording (Gerot&Wignell, 1994: 6).

SFL categorizes the function of language into three areas, which are called Metafunction: Ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning and textual meaning. According to Halliday (Teich, 1999: 15) ideational metafunction is concerned with the speaker's experience of the real world. In line with Halliday, Gerot and Wignell (1994: 22) describes that ideational meaning is meaning about things and ideas realized by the clause by option from transitivity.

This study will analyze students' ability in writing descriptive text by using systemic functional linguistic framework which focused on the transitivity process (ideational metafunction), so that the next elaboration will focus on the transitivity process.

4. Transitivity

Transitivity refers to the predicate types of language and the participant roles in which they combine (Siahaan and Sinoda, 2008: 100). In line with this Gerot and Wignell (1994: 52) state that the transitivity system construes the world of experience into a manageable set of process type. Transitivity consists of three components, namely: process, participant and circumstance.

Processes are expressions of happening, doing, being, saying and thinking. A process is realized in the grammar by means of verbal group, which is either one word, belonging to the class verb, or a group of words with a class verb word as the head or nucleus of the group." (But et al, 2000: 51).

Halliday and Matthiensen (2004) classify the type of process into material, behavioral, mental, verbal, relational, existential process. The explanations of each process are the following:

The first is material process, it construes doing or happening (Eggins, 2004). The same thing also explained by But et al (2000: 52) material process lead to answer to "what did somebody do?" or "what happened?" questions. Material process has an actor (who or what does the action) and also a goal (who or what receives the action).

For example:

The exhausted bushwalker

Dropped

His pack

Actor

Process: Material

Goal

Second is mental process. It encodes meaning of thinking or feeling. Mental process has two participants, namely: senser and phenomenon. The senser is in form of conscious being, and phenomenon is that which is sensed: felt, thought or seen. (Eggins, 2004: 225). According to Gerot and Wignell (2004) mental process is classified into three types, those are:

- Perception; verbs of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, etc.
- Affection; verbs of liking, pleasing, loving, hurting, fearing, etc.
- Cognition; verb of thinking, knowing, understanding, etc.

For example:

Mark

Likes

New clothes

Senser

Mental: affection

Phenomenon

Third, verbal process, is process of saying and all its many synonyms, including symbolic exchanging of meaning (Eggins, 2004: 235) as cited in Gerot and Wignell (1994:62) and But et al (2000: 56-57), the participant of verbal process is classified into four classes, those participants are:

- Sayer : participants that signal source.
- Receiver : the one to whom the verbalization is addressed.
- Verbiage : the content of what is said.
- Target :the object that is targeted by the verbal process.

For example:

John

Told

Jenny

a rude joke

Sayer

Verbal

Receiver

Verbiage

Fourth, relational process, is process which relates a participant to its identity or description (Butt, et al, 2000:58). According to Halliday (1985: 113-115) relational process is classified into two modes: attributive and identifying.

Attributive is process which encodes a quality, it has two main participants, namely: carrier and attribute, whereas identifying is process that establishes an identity, the participant roles in identifying process are token and value.

For example:

Mode Type

Attributive

Identifying

1.Intensive

Sarah is wise

Tom is the leader; The leader is Tom

2Circumstantial

The Fair is on Tuesday

Tomorrow is the 10th; The 10th is tomorrow

3.Possessive

Peter has a piano

The piano is peter's; Peter's is the piano

Fifth, behavioural process, this process construes physiological and physiological behavior, like breathing, dreaming, snoring, hiccupping, etc. it only has one obligatory participant that is behavior that is typically a conscious being (Gerot and Wignell, 1994: 60- 61).

For example:

He

Heaved

A great sigh

Behaver

Behavioural

Range

Sixth, existential process, represents experience by positing that 'there is something' (Eggins, 2004: 238). In line with Eggins, Gerot and Wignell (1994: 72) mention that existential process is process of existence. There is only one participant in existential processes, it is existent.

For example:

There is

a unicorn

In the garden

Existent

Circums: place

5. Circumstance

Circumstance answers such as questions as when, where, why, how, how many and as what (Gerot and Wignell, 2004: 52). In addition, But et al describes that there are eight types of circumstance. the completed explanations are displayed on the following table.

Types of circumstance and the samples

Types of circumstances

Answer the questions

Example

Extent

How long? How far? How many times?

(for) two hours (for) two miles five times a week

Location

Where? When?

in the yard after dinner

Manner

How? What with? How? What like?

by car with a stick quietly like a trooper

Cause

Why? What for?

Because of the rain For a rest

Contingency

If what?

In case of rain in spite of rain in the absence of fine weather

Accompaniment

With whom? And who else? But not who?

With friend As well as Henry Instead of Michael

Role
 What as?
 As a down
 Matter
 What about?
 About suffering
 Angle
 According to whom?
 To mary According to luke
 (Source: But et al, 2000: 65)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study a qualitative research was undertaken using case study method. This study was conducted in tenth grade of public senior high school in Karawang, the writer chose six students as participants. They were classified into low, middle and high achievers. The three groups were chosen by writer and their English teacher based on their proficiency in English.

Related to data collection, there were two data collection techniques used in this study including observation and documentation (collection of students' texts).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. Low Achievers Group

As previous elaboration, the students' texts would be analyzed based on the schematic structure and linguistic features by using systemic functional linguistic.

Text 1 (Ruler)

Text 2 (My House)

Text 1 and text 2 above were written by students who are classified as low achiever in the class. With regard to schematic structure, text 1 and text 2 have adopted all stages required in descriptive text including identification and description. in the identification stage of text 1 the writer began by describing 'ruler' such as "I have my ruler, my ruler have a size 40 cm...". Whereas on the text 2 the writer began by introducing 'my house' such as "my house live in perum bumi karawang permai 47 no 13, in my house do not have garden...".

In description stage of text 1 the writer tried to give detailed information such as the shape and color of the ruler "my ruler have a square shape". In the text 2 the writer described every room was in the house in the description stage such as "first room in my house is quest room".

With respect to social purpose of the text, the writers of text 1 and text 2 tried to described about things (ruler and my house) to the readers, this showed that the students of low achiever group have good understanding of the social purpose and the schematic structure of descriptive text as suggested by some experts (Derewianka (2004); Gerot&Wignell (1994); But, et all (2000); Pardiyono (2007); Siahaan and Shinoda (2007); Calaghan and Rothery (1998)).

Related to linguistic features the writers of text 1 and text 2 have used some linguistic features that are relevant to a descriptive text as mentioned by Gerot and Wignell (1994), those are:

- It uses specific participant: (1) ruler, (2) my house.
- It uses present tense: (1) I have a ruler, (2) in my house do not have a garden.
- It uses linking verb: (2) the tree is mango.
- It uses adjectives: (1) that (my ruler) has long not more than 40 cm (2) in my guest room (is) not a big and not a long.

- It uses relational process to describe the characteristic, material process to describe activities and existential process to represent the thing is exists or happens

(1)

I

Have

a ruler

Carrier

Attributive:

possessive

Attribute

And

can be used

for measuring not more than 40 cm

Material

Circumstance

(2)

In my house

do (does) not have

a garden but only one there

in front of my house

Circ: location

Attributive: possessive

Attribute

Circ: location

In my living room

there (are)

also

vision, a refrigerator and a fan

Circ: location

Existential

Existent

There are some ungrammatical structures found in text 1 and text 2 which make the message of the text can't be conveyed well, and it will be difficult for the readers to understand the ideas of the texts.

Here are some ungrammatical structures in text 1: "my ruler made in iron" it should be "my ruler made of iron", and in clause five "my ruler have good quality" it should be "my ruler has good quality".

In the text 2 such as in clause "my house live in perumbumikarawangpermai 47 no 13" it should be "my house is in perumbumikarawangpermai 47 no 13", and in the clause 2 "in my house do not have a garden" it should be "there is not a garden in my house". It is evidenced that the low achiever students lack of knowledge about grammar so they failed to deliver the information to the readers.

b. Middle Achiever Group

Text 3 (Pencil)

Text 4 (Girls' generation (SNSD))

Related to schematic structure, text 3 and text 4 have adopted all of descriptive text elements including identification and description.

In the identification stage of text 3 the writer began by describing the writer's pencil "I have pencil, my pencil size is short,,," in text 4 the writer began by identifying the writer's favorite girl band SNSD "Girls generation or SNSD is a girl group from south Korea, they are 9 members..."

In the description stage in text 3 the writer gave additional information about quality and the shape of the pencil "my pencil have a good quality, and the shape is cylinder very good for writing...". While in description stage of text 4 the writer tried to describe about the history of SNSD's carrier "girls generation debuted in 2007, the first song of they is into the world."

With respect to social purpose of the text, the writers of text 3 and text 4 tried to described about things (pencil) and girl band (SNSD) to the readers, this showed that the students of middle achiever group have good understanding of the social purpose and the schematic structure of descriptive text as suggested by some experts (Derewianka (2004); Gerot&Wignell (1994); But, et all (2000); Pardiyono (2007); Siahaan and Shinoda (2007); Calaghan and Rothery (1998)).

The text 3 and text 4 show the writer's comprehension in applying linguistic features of descriptive text as suggested by Derewianka (2004). The linguistic featured used in the text 3 and 4 can be seen below:

- It uses specific participant: (3) Pencil , (4) SNSD.
- It uses present tense: (3) I have a pencil, (4) girls' generation is a girl group from south Korea.
- It uses linking verb: (3) and the color is black (4) they are 9 members
- It uses adjectives: (3) my pencil are (is) useful to write everything (4) they have slim body and beautiful face
- It uses relational process to describe the characteristic, material process to describe activities and existential process to represent the thing is exists or happens

(3)

I

Have

a pencil

Carrier

Attributive: possessive

Attribute

Very good for writing

And

there are

many kind(s) of pencil

Existential

Existent

Girls' generation or (SNSD)

Is

a girl group

from south Korea

Carrier

Attributive: intensive

Attribute

Circ: location

(4)

In 2009

They

Released

a single

Circ: extent

Actor

Material

Goal

Related to grammatical structures, in text 3 and text 4 also contain grammatical mistakes for example: in text 3 “and made in Japan” it should be “and (it was) made in Japan”, and in clause six “my pencil are useful to write everything”, it should be “my pencil is useful to write everything”.

In text 4: “the first song of they is into the new world” it should be “the first song of them was into the new world”, in clause six “they do a training since 2000” it should be “the have done training since 2000”. The middle achiever students tend to have better capability in applying grammatical structure than low achiever students, because they only made few mistakes in grammatical structures.

High Achiever Group

Text 5 (my cat)

Text 6 (my friend)

The schematic structures of the text 5 and text 6 identify that the texts have essential element of descriptive text, those are: identification and description as suggested by Calaghan and Rothery (1998) and Pardiyono (2007).

In the identification stage in the text 5, the writer started her descriptive text by introducing the writer’s cat “my cat is my friend, if I alone at home...”. in the text 6 the writer began the identification stage by identifying the writer’s friend “I have friend in the class, she is a girl...”.

In description stage in the text 5 the writer narrated about the cat’s characteristics “my cat Kibo is a beautiful cat in my home, because my cat is female...”. In the description stage of text 6 the writer tried to tell about the friend’s characteristics and her daily activities “her skin is brown, she wears a veil everyday...”.

In line with social purpose of the text 5 and text 6 the writers tried to give information about animal (my cat) and person (my friend) to the readers, it evidenced that the writers of text 5 and text 6 have good insight about schematic structures and social purposes of descriptive text as explained by Derewianka (2004) and but et all (2000).

In term of linguistic features, these are some findings that indicate the writer capacity in composing descriptive text:

- It uses specific participant: (5) my cat, (6) my friend.
- It uses present tense: (5) my cat is my friend, (6) I have friend in the class.
- It uses linking verb: (5) Kibo body size is small but fat, (6) and the color is black.
- It uses adjectives: (4) Kibo is young cat, (6) her hair is short
- It uses relational process to describe the characteristic, material process to describe activities, behavioural process to describe behavior and mental process to represent the feeling

(5)

My cat

Is

my friend

Carrier

Attributive: intensive

Attribute

I
 Am
 so love
 my cat
 Senser
 Mental: affection
 Phenomenon
 (6)
 She
 Live(s)
 in Karawang
 Behavior
 Behavioural
 Circ: location
 She
 wore (wears)
 a veil
 Everyday
 Actor
 Material
 Goal
 Circ: extent

Although the students of high achiever show their good understanding in application schematic structure and linguistic features, they still made mistakes in grammatical structures, such as: in the text 5 "if I alone at home" it should be "if I am alone t home," in clause three "I'm so love my cat" it should be "I love my cat so much" in clause five "if I bad mood or anything else" it should be "if I am in bad mood or anything else," in the clause six "she's name is Kibo" it should be "her name is Kibo," in clause 14 "everybody like cat" it should be "everybody likes cat" in the text 6 "I have friend in the class" it should be I have a friend in the class, in clause five "she live in Karawang" it should be "she lives in Karawang" etc.

Referring to the students' mistakes in grammatical structure, it can be considered that the students of high achievers have lack of knowledge about grammar, it influences their competence in writing descriptive text.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis result discussed in the previous section, it can be concluded that the students of high middle and low achievers have used appropriate schematic structure of descriptive text. It consists of identification and description as suggested as some experts (Derewianka (2004); Gerot&Wignell (1994); But, et all (2000); Pardiyono (2007); Siahaan and Shinoda (2007); Calaghan and Rothery (1998)).

Concerning to linguistic features, all of the students implied the linguistic features of descriptive text including specific participant, present tense, linking verb, adjective and relational process. On the contrary, some ungrammatical structures found in the students' texts. Common students' mistakes are subject-verb agreement, verb tense form and possessive pronoun, further the students also faced difficulties to express and arrange the ideas into good sentences, thus the information couldn't be delivered well to the readers.

It shows that students still have problem about grammar knowledge and vocabulary mastery. Therefore, it is recommended for students to develop their knowledge and practice more in writing English.

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