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STUDENTS' ABILITY IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXTS FOR FIRST

STUDENTS OF SIYASAH IN THE SYARIAH AND LAW FACULTY

BY DEASY YUNITA SIREGAR, M.Pd

LECTURER OF SYARIAH AND LAW FACULTY

STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF NORTH SUMATERA (UIN-SU)

deasy61083@gmail.com

Abstract

Writing is an essential aspect of interaction on language teaching beside reading and speaking. Based on the ideas above, the researcher concludes that writing is a thinking process, a transaction with words followed by a physical act. The students are expected to be able to communicate in English both in oral and written form. Writing skill is very complex. It includes many things that are used as criteria. A good deal of attention is placed on compositions that students would emulate and how well a student final product measured up against a list of criteria that include content, organization, vocabulary use, grammatical use, and mechanical considerations such as spelling and punctuation

Keywords : Text, Writing Ability Descriptive Text

Writing is one of the basic tools of civilization. Myles (2002:1) said: the ability to write well is not a naturally acquired skill; it is usually learned or culturally transmitted as a set of practices in formal instructional settings or other environments. Writing skills must be practiced and learned through experience. Then Hugley et al (1983:3) explain that "writing is a communicative act. It depends upon the awareness of the social expectation". This means as communicative act, writing can develop social relationship and social expectation because writing is one of the tools in communication. Furthermore, writing is an essential aspect of interaction on language teaching beside reading and speaking. Based on the ideas above, the researcher concludes that writing is a thinking process, a transaction with words followed by a physical act. The students are expected to be able to communicate in English both in oral and written form. The skill of writing is taught by using genre based approach. Students are introduced to some genres and taught through the model of reading texts where they are explicitly taught about the social function, the generic structures, and the language features of the genres. By introducing them to the reading model texts, they are expected to know and understand the difference between one genre to another in English, so that they are able to

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write the genres by themselves with the right order of generic structures and the correct use of the language features of genres.

For the writer hence, is expected to be able to arrange, organize the students' sentences clearly, coherently, and perfectly. Then, they should rewrite and revise it until what the students have written becomes plausible, understandable, and meaningful, so that the writer's message is easily understood by readers. So, whatever is written should be aimed at the reader, that person or persons who are expected read the composition.

A descriptive text is a text which a writer tries to picture what he is describing. According to Barnet and Stubbs (1990:105) "A good paragraph has unity (it makes one point, or it indicates where one unit of the topic begins and ends)". To have a paragraph unity a student has to support the ideas into the sentences. By mastering the describing, they may make a good classification of objects based on the characteristics. In narrative text description is also used, especially when the students want to describe the characteristics of a character or certain setting. The description is also can be done subjectively and objectively. The objective description will be chosen if it describes the physical appearance of an object or person. The subjective is used when the students want to give their opinion to the object. Those combination make the descriptive text is unique and the researcher interested in choosing this genre. Reep (2009:82) states that "a paragraph achieves coherence when the sentences proceed in a sequence that supports one point at a time.

In descriptive text, the students should organize their thinking logically and they can communicate to the other people in detail when they want to describe people, place, or things. This is why the researcher chooses descriptive text. The second year students in Junior High School also had learnt reading descriptive text in the first year, especially in the second semester. Hence, the researcher assumes that they already know well about descriptive text.

There were some difficulties that students face during writing the descriptive paragraph. First, the problem in developing the ideas. Based on students wrote many main ideas in one paragraph; the idea of the paragraph was still ambiguous. Sometimes, it is also found that some paragraphs were written in one sentence only. The idea of the paragraph was still not clear. Second, the problem in organizing the ideas to write a descriptive text. A paragraph needs more than a unified point; it needs a reasonable organization or sequence. The students have to organize their ideas into good paragraphs; the students have to make

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their writing readable. To write a descriptive paragraph, the students can organize their ideas by identifying the topic and give the descriptions about the topic. Third, the students found difficulties in grammar.

Grammar difficulties will influence certain patterns of how words are put together to form the correct sentences. It will make the ideas do develop well. Fourth, when students procees writing something, many problems could be found. Some students are lack of vocabulary and they also have difficulties in developing their ideas related to their topic. Some students were still in doubt with choosing the correct words while composing descriptive text. Lack of vocabularies made the students confused in developing their ideas. In this case the students have to choose correct words that they need. The last difficulty was related with spelling, punctuation and capitalization. Some how not all of the aspects become the difficultis or problem for the students. Students may have difficultis in one aspect but they are may be good at another aspects. For example, some students have difficulties in developing idea, but they are good in grammar and vice versa. There are some definitions about description. The first is from Schacter. According Schacter (2007: 15) he said, that descriptive writing describes a person, place or thing in a way that enables the reader to capture the description. Based on Irvine (2000: 34), the other definition is presenting details an object to the readers as clearly as possible. Than Kane (1987:7) states that, description is also about sensory experience-how something looks, sounds and tastes based on the reader"s opinion. Based on handbook "Easy English Learning" (2007:6), in descriptive text there are some elements, they are generic structures and language features. A good description is a word picture; the reader can imagine the object, place, or person in his or her mind. Descriptive writing appeals to the senses, so it tells how something looks, feels, smells, taster, and sounds. The students must be mastered about the generic stucture of descriptive text before they write descriptive text. The generic structures of descriptive text are introduction (identifies phenomena to be described), description/ content (describes parts, qualities, and characteristics), and conclusion. According to Mark (2003:26-27) the firts generic structure is a general opening statement in the first paragraph (introduction), the second is a series of paragraph about the subject (description) and the last is conclusion.

- a. Introduction / identification

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The statement introduces the subject of the description to the audience. It can give the audience brief details about the when, where, who, or what the subject.

b. The content of a text Descriptive

Each paragraph usually begins with a topic sentence. The topic sentence previews the details that will be contained in the remainder of the paragraph. Each paragraph should describe one feature.

Developing ideas is the most important thing to the students in writing descriptive text. By developing the ideas, the students can make a good writing text and develop their ideas clearly in each paragraph. In organizing ideas, students have to identify the name place and describe the detail of the place in the supporting paragraph. In writing descriptive text the students have to use an appropriate grammar, in this case simple present tense.

In writing a descriptive text the writers should know well what they want to describe. They describe their ideas and thoughts vividly based on what they see, hear, taste, smell, or touch. Anderson & Anderson (2003) add that descriptive text is different from information reports because they described a specific subject rather than general group. In addition, Temple, et al. (1998) states. "description is discourse that helps us visualize. It focuses upon the appearance or the nature of an object. In description, we see vividly and concretely, we perceive the object with a kind of fullness for which exposition does not strive". In Library of Congress (2008) it is stated that we use descriptive text to describe a person, place or thing. For example, we might want to describe what a crab looks like, or how he moves. Be sure to include details that describe sounds, color, smells, setting and so on. According to Friedman (2010) descriptive details mean to grab the reader's attention.

A descriptive text is considered as the simplest and easiest writing form compared to narrative, recount, or procedure, particularly for the beginning writers (Ellis et. al., 1989). In addition, it allows students to share interesting impressions of a person, a place, or an object surrounding them (Troyka, 1987).

The purpose of writing description is to describe a person, place, or thing in such vivid detail that the reader can easily form a precise mental picture of what is being written about, or can feel that they are part of the experience (KangGuru in the Classroom: Teacher's Guide SMA Package, 2005). Stanley (1988) asserts that the aim of description is to convey to

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the reader what something looks like. Furthermore, Johnston & Morrow (1981) states that the purpose of descriptive text is to describe objects or persons in which the writer is interested. Therefore, the writer should know well what he wants to describe, starts by observing the objects carefully to take the significant details and brings clear picture to the readers and avoid ambiguities. Wardiman, et. al. (2008) specify the generic structure of descriptive text into two parts, that is 1) introduction is the part of paragraph that introduces the character; and 2) description is the part of paragraph that describes the character. This indicates that a descriptive text has two elements – an element to identify phenomenon (*identification*) and another one (*description*) to portray parts, qualities, or characteristics. In terms of significant lexico grammatical features, the text focuses on specific participants, contains attribute and identifying process, comprises epithets and classifiers in nominal groups as well as uses simple present tense (Sutardi & Sukhran, 2004).

Descriptive text has Structure as below:

1. Identification; identifying the phenomenon to be described. Beside, identification is the part of paragraph that introduces the character.
2. Description; describing the phenomenon in parts, qualities, or/and characteristic.

Language Feature of Descriptive Text

1. Using attributive and identifying process.
2. Relational process.
3. Using specific noun.
4. Using figurative language.
5. Using simple present tense.

The skill to write descriptive text is taught at the first year. Sudarwati and Eudia (2007:113-137) state that “the targets of teaching writing descriptive text for the first year students of Junor High School are (1) the students are able to describe animals and people, (2) the students are able to describe their school, (3) the students are able to describe places”. This curriculum is the teachers' creation in the school though standard content and standard competence. Standard content and standard competence in Permendiknas (No.41, 2007:18):

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Write in new language since they should translate their idea to the target language and understand the specific grammar rule in English. The students must study grammar and vocabulary earlier before starting writing. Their vocabulary must be rich and they should understand the grammar of a certain text well to make a good result. Those criteria make them work hard to write. From the reality above, it can be seen that the research on writing is important as the effort to solve those problems.

About writing ability, there is such a standard competence as it is stated in the curriculum 2006 of English; (1) Expressing of the meaning of simple short essay functional written text in the form of the descriptive and recount to interact with surrounding. (2) Expressing meaning in short functional texts (e.g., notices, advertisements, invitations, etc.), formal and informal written using various written languages accurately, smoothly, and thanked in the context of everyday life. (3) Expressing meaning and rhetorical step in the simple short essay by using various written languages as accurate, smooth, and acceptable to interact with surrounding in the form of descriptive and recount text.

When the students write a text, there are some aspects that they must master such as vocabulary and grammar. The students can use simple present and adjective clause in writing descriptive text. The errors are the students still feel strange and face some difficulties with English lesson especially in developing paragraph. Therefore, the researcher wants to analyze their weakness in their writing. The characteristics of descriptive writing based on Schacter (1984) are: 1) Sensory details. 2) Precise language (cow instead of animal; mansion instead of home). 3) Comparisons (under the jeweled sky; speaks like a queen). 4) Strong verbs (She slammed the bag down.). 5) Hyperbole (faster than a thunderclap; hard as a stone). The students should do some activities in descriptive writing, such as: 1. Organizing their thinking logically. 2. Searching for and communicate in details. 3. Defining people, places and things . 4. Writing with clarity and purpose.

Description is the most important text type that the writer must comprehend. By description skill, the writer can make a good classification of a certain object based on his / her experience, observation and interaction to the object. The description can be done subjectively and objectively. Description is also used in the other text types, such as narrative,

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procedure , or recount. This part is mentioned in the opening paragraph before giving an explanation. Narrative text also uses this genre. The writer may use it to develop characterization or give the opinion about a certain setting or theme.

The research problem of this analyzing is How the students' ability in writing a descriptive texts on the first students' in Syariah and Law Faculty in the Academic Year of 2016 / 2017? And the significances of the research are first; for the students, they can find out their strength and weakness so that they can fix the weakness and improve the strength in writing descriptive texts. Second, for teachers, the English teachers can use the research for increasing their method to find out the students' strength and weakness aspect in writing descriptive text and also for another genre of text. Further Researchers, the research findings are expected to give information about writing in descriptive text. It is hoped to be an inspiration for the next researchers who will do a research in this field. It can be the guidance for them to do a better research.

In order to collect the data, the researcher conducted a test. The test given was writing descriptive text. The score of the test consist of five aspects. The aspects measured are developing ideas, organizing idea, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanic. After conducting the test the result in form of students' scores are tabulated as follows: The data that been collected need to be analyzed. The researcher will analyze this data by some steps. Some formulas were applied in this research to process the data as follows:

1. Tabulating the students' scores

The students' score was tabulated by using the following criteria:

Table 1. Indicators of Scoring Rubric in the Descriptive text

No	Aspect	Indicator	Sub Indicator	Score
1	Developing Ideas	1. Paragraph unity 2. Coherence	a. Topic b. Topic sentence c. Concluding sentence a. The sentence hold together	8
2.	Organizing idea	1. Coherence	a. Repeat key from sentence to sentence b. Use pronoun for	14

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		<p>2. Identification</p> <p>3. Description</p> <p>Part, Qualities, and Characteristic</p>	<p>preceding key term c. Use demonstrative adjective d. Uses connecting words</p> <p>a. Identify the name of place and location b. Describe the complete features of the place</p>	
3.	Grammar	<p>1. Simple present tense</p> <p>2. Adjective words</p>	<p>a. To describe b. actions or conditions that are usual, habitual or permanent. c. to state general /truth d. for future action on schedule time e. for future action in certain time. f. relational verbs used when classifying and describing appearances/qualities and parts/functions of phenomena (is, are, has, have).</p> <p>used to add extra information to nouns and may be technical, everyday or literally, depending on the text.</p>	14
4	Vocabulary	<p>1. Word choices</p> <p>2. Amount of vocabulary</p>	<p>Choose the appropriate and accurate words to express ideas.</p> <p>200 words</p>	4

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5.	Mechanic	1. Punctuation	a. comma, b. Period, c. the d. colon, e. Semicolon, f. Apostrophe, g. Quotation marks, h. the dash	28
		2. Capitalization	a. the first word in sentence b. capitalize pronoun I, c. capitalize the titles of composition, d. capitalize the proper noun e. capitalize name of detail, title, month, day, specific group or geographic areas, and specific structures.	
		3. Spelling	Avoid misspelling	
Maximum Score				68

2. Calculating the students score

3. Analyzing students score based on the scores which were gotten from the test, the research calculated the scores so that the finding of the research was be revealed in form of the information related to the analysis of students' writing skill in descriptive text. Then, the scores were analyzed according to the central tendency (mean, mode, and median) and standard deviation for the each aspects and whole aspect.

4. The researcher give the score clasification

There are five level of the students' writing ability encompassing poor, fair, average, good, excellent Harris (1969). The students' score skill level :

81 – 100 classifield as Excellent

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61 – 80 classifield as Good

41 – 60 classifield as Average

21 – 40 classifield as Fair

0 – 20 classifield as Poor

From the data presentation in general result found that the students' mean score in writing descriptive text is 54 and according to the score classification theory by Harris (1969) categorized as average. The scores were analyzed according to the central tendency (mean, mode, and median) and standard deviation come from five aspects they are developing idea, organizing idea, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanic. Beside the data was analyzed in general, each aspect was also being analyzed. First is from the aspect of developing ideas. There are two indicators in this aspect, they are paragraph unity and coherence. The paragraph unity itself has the sub indicators consists of topic, topic sentence, and concluding sentence. And the coherence sub indicators consist of sentence hold together. With the guide of indicators and sub indicators, the researcher can collect and analyze the data. The finding shows that the mean score in developing ideas aspect is 60, mode 50 & 75, median 50.5, standard deviation 23.27 and according to the score classification theory categorized as average level.

The second aspect to be analyzed is Organizing idea. There are 3 indicators in this aspect, they are Coherence, Identification, Description. The coherence indicators has the sub indicators consists of repeat key from sentence to sentence, use pronoun for preceding key term, use demonstrative adjective, uses connecting words. Next identification indicator has the sub indicators consists of Identify the name of place and location, describe the complete features of the place. And the last description indicators have the sub indicators consists of part, qualities, and characteristic. With the guide of indicators and sub indicators, the researcher can collect and analyze the data. The finding shows that the mean score in organizing idea aspect is 66, mode 71, median 71.5, standard deviation 13.3 and according to the score classification theory the categorized as good level. Compared with the previous aspect can be seen that the mean score of this aspect is higher than developing ideas aspect.

The third aspect to be analyzed is Grammar. There are two indicators in this aspect, they are simple present tense and adjective words. In Simple present tense indicator has the

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sub indicators consists of; to describe, actions or conditions that are usual, habitual or permanent, to state general /truth, for future action on schedule time, for future action in certain time, relational verbs used when classifying and describing appearances /qualities and parts/functions of phenomena (is, are, has, have). The next Adjective words indicators has the sub indicators consists of used to add extra information to noun sand may be technical, everyday or literally, depending on the text. In this aspect of indicators and sub indicators, the researcher can collect and analyze the data. The finding shows that the mean score in grammar aspect is 54, mode 57, median 57.5, standard deviation 14.16 and according to the score classification theory the categorized as average level compared with the previous aspect can be seen that the mean score of this aspect is lower than developing ideas and organizing idea aspects.

The next aspect is vocabulary. This aspect consists of two indicator they are word choices and In sub indicator of word choices is choose the appropriate and accurate words to express ideas. In sub indicator of word choices is choose the appropriate and accurate words to express ideas. Then in terms of of In sub indicator of word choices is 200 words. With the guide of indicators and sub indicators, the researcher can collect and analyze the data. the result of collect and analyze the data finding and to shows that the mean score in vocabulary aspect is 64, mode 50, median 50.5, standard deviation 20.34 and according to the score classification theory the categorized as good level compared with the previous aspect can be seen that the mean score of this aspect is less than organizing ideas aspect but higher than grammar, and developing ideas aspect.

The last aspect is mechanic. There are three indicators in this aspect, they are punctuation, capitalization and spelling. The punctuation indicators has the sub indicators consists of; comma, period, the, colon, semicolon, apostrophe, quotation marks, the dash. The next capitalization indicators has the sub indicator as follows; the first word in sentence, capitalize pronoun I, capitalize the titles of composition, capitalize the proper noun, capitalize name of detail, title, month, day, specific group or geographic areas, and specific structures. And then the last in terms of sub indicator spelling is a void misspelling. With the guide of indicators and sub indicators, the researcher collect and analyze the data to shows that the mean score in mechanic aspect is 46, mode 46, median 46.5, standard deviation 11.92 and according to the

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score classification theory the categorized as average level compared with the previous aspect can be seen that the mean score of this aspect is the lowest aspect.

From the students' mean score in each aspect, it could be seen that the students' weakness in writing descriptive text is in mechanic aspect with mean score 46 From the result we also can find that the students' strength in writing descriptive text is in organizing idea aspect with mean score 66. However the students' work still can be categorized as average level.

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