

STUDENTS' MAIN PROBLEMS IN WRITING NARRATIVE TEXTS
(A Descriptive Study Conducted towards Students of Manajemen Pendidikan
Islam at STAI AL MUHAMMAD CEPU)

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ABSTRACT

During conducting my English class for 3 years, only some of MPI students succeeded in writing narrative texts, and others got the standard minimum score. The problems can be mentioned as; lack of vocabularies, error and mistake in past tense structure, and also the paragraph organization. Based on the situation above, the writer wanted to figure out the main problems (mistakes and errors) faced by MPI students in writing narrative texts. By conduction this study, the writer hoped that the writer would be able to find the treatment, so that students will be able to improve their skill and competence in writing narrative texts. This study, the writer used descriptive qualitative research. To gain the data, the writer analyzed the students' work in composing narrative texts (documents) and interview section. From the documents and interview section, the writer could draw the conclusion that the main mistakes and errors should be treated were: 1) the generic structure of their writing narrative texts; 2) the use of past tense structure; simple past tense, past continuous, past perfect, and past perfect continuous tense; 3) the use of incorrect elements of sentences.

Key words: students' problems, narrative-text

INTRODUCTION

Writing is part of four skills in learning English. At STAI AL MUHAMMAD CEPU (STAI AMC), especially Manajemen Pendidikan Islam (MPI) program, the students are required

to compose several writing products with their own words. Hyland (2003:9) said that "writing is a way of sharing personal meaning and writing courses emphasize the power of the individual to construct

his or her views on a topic”.¹ From this statement we can say that writing is one of the ways in which people do to share their information and give their views on some topics or themes.

There are several text types need to be finished by students of MPI program, for example; descriptive, narrative, and also discussion text. In the second semester, MPI students need to accomplish both speaking and writing skill. Especially for writing skill, students are directed to compose their own narrative texts. Siahaan (2008: 73) states “narrative is any written English text in which the writer wants to amuse, entertain people, and to deal with actual or vicarious experience in different ways”.² It means that narrative text is a text which tells a story of past events, has function to entertain the readers or listeners, and deals with actual and vicarious experience in different ways.

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students succeeded in writing narrative texts, and others got the standard minimum score. The problems can be mentioned as; lack of vocabularies, error and mistake in past tense structure, and also the paragraph organization. Based on the situation above, the writer wanted to figure out the main problems faced by MPI students in writing narrative texts. By doing so, the writer and the students will be able to improve the teaching and learning narrative text.

Writing skill

Mayers (2005: 5) states “writing is an action- process of discovering and organizing ideas, putting them on a paper, reshaping and revising them.”³ Besides, according to Harmer (2004), through writing students are able to express their ideas, thought and feeling into written symbol.”⁴

Based on the theory of writing above, in contra, the writer observed that MPI students encountered some problems in writing. Their mistakes were a

¹ Hyland, Ken, *Second Language Writing*, (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2003).

² Siahaan, Sanggam and Kisno Shinoda., *GenericText Structure*. (Yogyakarta, Graha Ilmu, 2008). 78

³ Mayers, Alan, *Gateways to Academic Writing: Effective Sentences, Paragraph, and Essays*. (New York, Longman, 2005). 5

⁴ Harmer, Jeremy, *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, (Harlow, Longman, 2001).

completely inadequate essay, for example; disorganized of their composition, unintelligible sentence structure, disregard for English writing conventions, and inappropriate use of vocabulary.

Narrative text

Anderson (1997) states that “narrative is text, which tells a story and in doing so, entertains or informs the reader or listener”.⁵ Moreover, Pardiyono (2007, p. 93-113), stated the following points should be considered in writing narrative text :

1. Communicative purpose

The communicative purpose is to amuse or entertain and give a good lesson the readers.

2. Rhetorical structures

The rhetorical structure of narrative text focuses on a series of stages that propose to build a story. The stages include orientation (the introduction of the characters who involve in the story, time, and the place where the story takes place), sequence of events which are problematic the kinds to

conflict- climax, resolution (the ending of the story containing the problem solution) and coda (moral lesson).

3. Grammatical pattern

Writing narrative text using the past tense to tell about past activities or events in the past.

The nature of the sentence. A sentence is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb to express a complete thought, which begins with a capital letter and ended with a period. A sentence can be formed from one or two clauses that joined with conjunctions or relative connectors.

4. Elements of sentences. A sentence consists of several related elements in it: subject, predicate, object, an adverb. Subject must be a noun, the predicate must be a verb and object must be a noun. Either subject or object can take the form of a word, a phrase or a clause, while predicate can only take the form of a word and a phrase. Most adverbs are in the form of phrases, which are formed by using prepositions. Therefore, each proposition is usually in the adverbial phrase.

⁵ Anderson, Mark and Kathy Anderson, *Text Type in English*, (South Yara, Macmillan, 1997).

5. Adverbs play important in its role of contributing for better clarity of the message conveyed in the sentence. It can express the information about time, place, reason, purpose, status, and frequency. Lots of adverbs are marked with the use of prepositions; in, at, for, after, as, too, as, etc. An adverb can be in the form of 'word' or phrase'.⁶

By looking the theories above, unfortunately, the writer found some of MPI students' narrative text still loosed some points, such as; some grammatical errors, inappropriate vocabularies chosen, and also disorganized of text composition. By finished this study, the writer hoped that the result will help them to be able to identify their own mistakes and errors, facilitate them to revise the mistakes and errors, and lead them to compose a good and right narrative text.

Research Method

In this study, the writer used descriptive qualitative research. To gain

the data, the writer analyzed the students' work in composing narrative texts (documents) and interview section. From the documents and interview answer, the writer focused on finding out the typical mistakes and errors, so that the writer were able to categorize the mistakes and errors into the main categories as stated in the theories. To analyze the data, the writer followed the sequence steps as stated by Miles and Huberman (1994: 12) theory, in the descriptive qualitative research the data analysis are: "data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification."⁷

1) Data Reduction

Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data that appear in written up field notes or transcriptions.

2) Data Display

Data display is a second component or level in Miles and Huberman model of qualitative data analysis. A display can be an

⁶ Pardiyo, *Pasti Bisa! Teaching genre-based writing*, (Yogyakarta, C.V Andi Offset, 2007). 93-113

⁷ Miles, Matthew B. and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, (London, Sage Publications, 1994). 12

extended piece of text or a diagram, graph, chart, table or matrix that provides a new way of arranging thinking about the more textually embedded data.

3) Conclusion Drawing and Verification

The last step of analyzing the data is conclusion drawing/verification. Conclusion drawing involves stepping back to consider what the analyzed data mean and to assess their implication for the questions at hand.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In week 1, at the very beginning, the writer explained the material about narrative text (the generic structure, the grammar, the adverbs, and vocabularies building), and share many examples, such as; legends, myths, and also fairy tales. The examples of the narrative texts included both from national and abroad. In week 2, the writer asked the students to choose and read two of narrative texts from the previous meeting. Besides, the writer also let them if they chose any different titles from the previous meeting. In week 3, the writer asked the students to

rewrite one of two texts they already chosen in the previous week with their own words. Still in the same day, the writer gave back their work. The writer gave underline for inappropriate or incorrect sentences, words spelling, and words chosen. Students should correct their writing, submit it again as their final narrative texts. In week 4. The writer held interview section with the students based on their final work.

Here are some mistakes and errors found by the writer from the students' work:

Mistakes or Errors	Type of Mistake or Error
One upon a time....	Spelling
On the north of Sumatra, lived a woman poor	Word order
Malin kundang decide to go	Grammar
The mother was so exciting to	Grammar

meet her son.	
A long time ago, there were two animal, Sura and Baya.	Grammar
Once Sura and Baya looking for some food.	Spelling
They both hit together.	Inappropriate vocab
Baya was very angry that he knew that Sura broke the promise.	Grammar
Long time ago, there was a farmer	Spelling
The farmer hid the magical wings so she could not fly anymore.	Pronoun
They felt pity of him, then they decided to build a bridge	Connectors
... for him to climb to the sky and see the son and wife	Pronoun

From the students' documents (narrative texts), the writer tried to summarize, deduce and explain that the main mistakes and errors made by MPI students in their narrative text were mostly: 1) grammatical pattern; it should be writing narrative text using the past tense to tell about past activities or events in the past. This conditions was not in line with the theory about grammatical patterns as proposed by Pardiyono (2007, p. 95)⁸; 2) the element of sentence; their sentences should be following the rules of: A sentence consists of several related elements in it: subject, predicate, object, an adverb. Subject must be a noun, the predicate must be a verb and object must be a noun. Either subject or object can take the form of a word, a phrase or a clause, while predicate can only take the form of a word and a phrase. Most adverbs are in the form of phrases, which are formed by using prepositions. Therefore, each proposition is usually in the adverbial phrase. Pardiyono (2007, p. 112).⁹

Moreover, not only analyzed their documents, the writer also confirmed the

⁸ Pardiyono, *Pasti Bisa! Teaching genre-based writing*, (Yogyakarta, C.V Andi Offset, 2007). 95

⁹ Pardiyono, *Pasti Bisa! Teaching genre-based writing*, (Yogyakarta, C.V Andi Offset, 2007). 112

students' works by holding an interview section. The writer delivered several questions to each students related to the mistakes and errors which were still found in their final texts. The questions were as follows:

1. Did you get narrative explanation in your SMA program?
2. If it was "yes", could I say that you have already known and understood well about it?
3. To be compared, how was my explanation about narrative text in my first meeting? Was it clear for you?
4. Did you read the narrative text that you chose?
5. Did you find any unfamiliar words?
6. Did you try to find out the meaning of the words?
7. Could you identify the generic structure of your own text?
8. Did you get difficulties in arranging your sentences?
9. What sentence structure did you use to write your narrative story?
10. Did you confirm the meaning of your words with a dictionary?
11. Did you confirm the spelling of

your words with a dictionary?

12. Could you mention your difficulty in writing a narrative text?

From those questions above, the writer got various answers. Then, from all the answers could be interpreted by the writer as follows:

First, most students were not really familiar yet with the title they already chose. They also could not identify the generic structure of the text; which on is the orientation, the problem, and the solution, so that their paragraphs were disorganized.

Second, most students did not confirm their words used in their narrative text by looking a dictionary. It caused some mistakes and errors to their work, for example; the use of inappropriate words, the miss spelling, and also disordering noun phrase.

Third, the students still got little understanding about past tense structure. This condition made their narrative text getting worst, since they often wrote their sentences in "present tense". The incorrect grammar they made included positive, negative, and also interrogative sentences. In positive sentences, the tended to use V1; in negative sentences the writer observed

“does not” occurred many times; in interrogative sentences, the students sometimes missed the word “did”.

After matching the mistakes and errors occurred both in the MPI students' documents (their narrative texts) and their answers in the interview section, the writer would like to state the main problems to be concerned. The writer could draw the main problems here following the rules as mentioned by Pardiyono (2007, p. 93-113). Finally, the writer could conclude that the main problems faced by MPI students in writing narrative texts were:

1. The genetic structure (identifying the orientation, problem, resolution, and coda)
2. The grammatical pattern (the use of past tense)
3. The elements of sentences. (the disordering noun phrase).

CONCLUSION

The result of this study showed that many of MPI students' still got many mistakes and errors in writing narrative texts. From the documents and interview section, the writer could draw the conclusion that the main mistakes and errors should be traected were: 1) the generic

structure of their writing narrative texts; 2) the use of past tense structure; simple past tense, past continuous, past perfect, and past perfect continuous tense; 3) the use of incorrect elements of sentences, such as the use of incorrect noun phrase as a subject, inappropriate adjectives and adverbs. Those three main mistakes and errors faced by MPI students should be treated as soon as possible. After conduction this study, the writer hoped that the writer would be able to find the solution (the treatment).

The writer also proposed some suggestions for MPI students. Hopefully, by the next semester, MPI students will be more active in English class. The students should pay more attention, should read the learning material again before doing the task, and moreover, the students should be familiar in using dictionary (written dictionary, e-dictionary, app- dictionary).

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