



## **AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' ABILITY AND DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT**

by:

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### **Abstract**

The title of this paper is “*An Analysis of Students’ Ability and Difficulties in Writing Descriptive Text*”. The researcher did the research at vocational high school. This research focused on the students’ ability and difficulties in writing descriptive text. Even though descriptive text is not too difficult, but many students still found it difficult. The aims of the research are to know the ability of students in writing descriptive text, to know the difficulties of students in writing descriptive text, and to know how the teacher teaches descriptive text. This is a qualitative research. In collecting the data, the researcher used text analysis, observation and questionnaire. The components of writing that are analyzed are developing the ideas, organizing of ideas, grammar, vocabulary and punctuation. The results of this study illustrate that student faced difficulties in organizing and developing ideas. They were not able to develop ideas on the texts they wrote. Whereas, in term of grammar there was no significant difficulty, they can write descriptive text by using the correct grammar. In term of vocabulary, it was difficult for students to choose appropriate vocabulary even some of them still used Bahasa Indonesia. In term of punctuation marks, there is no significant error. Based on the results of this study, it is suggested for teachers to pay attention to the teaching structure of descriptive text in the development of ideas, arrangement of ideas, grammar, vocabulary and punctuation. Teachers are also expected to provide examples and practice about the descriptive text to the students so they can achieve the purpose of education, especially in English subject.

***Keywords:*** *students’ ability and difficulties, writing, descriptive text*



## INTRODUCTION

Language is very important for human life, because by language we can get good communication and interaction with the other people. On Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary of Current English, Hornby (1995:325) stated that "Language is the system of communication in speech and writing that is used by people of particular country."

We can use many kinds of languages to communicate with other people in the world, and one of them is English. In studying English, students must study some skills of English, such as listening, reading, writing, and speaking. In this research the researcher will focus on writing.

Some of students think that writing is the most difficult skill in English. The students are difficult to find the idea when they write. Most of them wrote incorrect sentences. Some students also could not finish their writing at the end of the time set because of less ideas and vocabulary.

If the teacher wants to know about students' ability in English, the teacher can see from writing of students. In language learning, writing is one of important skills because it is the most effective way to show someone's English proficiency, include the ability and difficulties (Ren, *et al*, 2009:141-146).

According to Indonesia curricula (2004), "There are some types of the text that should be learned by tenth grade in English subject, they are Recount, Narrative, Procedural, News Item and Descriptive". In this research, the text type will focus on Descriptive text.

Descriptive text is the clear description of people, places, objects, or events using appropriate details. An effective description will contain sufficient and varied elaboration of details to communicate a sense of the subject being described. Details used are usually sensory and selected to describe what the writer see, hear, smell, touch, and taste. (Rass, 2001:98)

Based on the background above the research conduct the research aim is to answer 3 research questions:

1. How does the teacher teach descriptive writing text in the class?
2. How is the tenth graders ability in writing Descriptive text?
3. What difficulties are reflected in the tenth graders text?



## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

### **a. Writing**

Writing is a way of communication and of course communicates all the time. Then, Deporter and Heracki (2002:179) explain that writing is a whole brain activity, which uses right brain side (emotion) and left-brain side (logic). Although right and left-brain sides are used in writing, right brain side has a big position because it is a place, which appears new ideas and emotion.

### **b. Descriptive Text**

Descriptive text is a text which is intended to describe a particular person, place or thing. The schematic structure of Descriptive text is divided into two: Identification and Description. Besides schematic structure, descriptive text also has its own linguistic features. Linguistic features of descriptive text are: use specific participant, written in present tense, use linking verbs, use adjectives, use relational and material processes (Derewianka, 1990; Gerot & Wignell, 1994; Nafisah & Kurniawan, 2007; and also Emilia, 2010).

## **METHOD**

The research Methodology is qualitative research as the research design. There are several reasons why this study uses case study as the research design. Firstly, case study typically observes the characteristics of an individual unit deeply analyze the various phenomena (Cohen and Manion 1998: 124-5, cited in Bassegy 1999). This is the same the purpose of the study that is to find out the students' ability and difficulties by observing and analyzing the students' text.

Secondly, case study can be used to investigate an individual, a group, such as family, an office or a class; it also can be an institution, such as school (Gillham, 2000:19).

Lastly, case study investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2003:13; Yin, 2011:17). In this case, the study investigates the students' ability and difficulties through real teaching and learning process in a real school in Indonesia.



### **a. Participants**

The participants of this research were class of tenth grade students of vocational high school in Cianjur. The class consists of 22 students and all of students are males, because the majority of students in this school are male. But in the second meeting there are 20 students that present on that day. So, only 20 students that used as the samples.

### **b. Instruments**

The instruments of the research are observation, questionnaire and students' text analysis:

#### **1. Observation**

Observation is the process of gathering firsthand information by observing people and places at a research site (Cresswell, 2002:624). In this case observation used to know how the teacher teaches the material in teaching learning activity.

#### **2. Questionnaire**

Questionnaire used to collect more data to support the final result of the research. It was given to the students after last meeting. Participants answer the questions supply basic, personal, or demographic information about themselves (Cresswell, 2002:62).

#### **3. Students' Text Analysis**

In the text analysis, the researcher used descriptive text. Then, the topics of the test were about describing people. The components of writing that analyzed by researcher are developing ideas, organizing ideas, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics. In terms of mechanics, the researcher analyzed punctuation and capitalization of the students' text.

### **c. Data Analysis**

Qualitative method was used to analyze the students' writing test. The aspects which were: developing ideas, organizing ideas, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics were scored by the people who competent in writing and in scoring the test, such as teacher of English. The researcher takes three steps that can use for analyzing the data.



The first step was describing and interpreting how the teacher teaches writing descriptive text in the class.

The second step was describing or interpreting the ability and difficulties in writing descriptive text.

The last step in data analysis was analyzing the students' descriptive texts based on the developing ideas, organizing ideas, grammar, and vocabulary of text. (Derewianka, 1990; Gerot & Wignell, 1994; Nafisah & Kurniawan, 2007).

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. The Way Teacher Teach Writing Descriptive Text in the Class**

The data presented in this study are based on the results of observation. The researcher did this observation for two meetings. The first meeting was conducted to get information about the real condition of the students during teaching and learning process. Then, the second meeting was conducted to get information about their difficulties in writing descriptive text based on questionnaire.

#### **a. First Meeting**

The researcher did the first meeting on Tuesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016. The first step, the teacher said "Assalamu'alaikum and how are you?" as greeting. After that, the teacher checked the students' attendance list. All students present on that day.

The second step, the teacher showed the video about describing people. After watching the video, the teacher asked to the students what the video's about? The teacher did this to stimulate brain of students and to know the students' knowledge about descriptive text.

The teacher showed power point about descriptive text, to make the learning activity easier. Descriptive text is a text that tells about how to describe people, place or something. Gerot & Wignell, (1994:208) said the same ideas that descriptive text is a text which is intended to describe a particular person, place or thing. Descriptive text has two generic structures;

1. Identification; give information about thing, place and people.
2. Description; gives information in more detail to support the identification.

The teacher focused on describing people to teach descriptive text. Next, the teacher gave the examples of descriptive text in the slide, the text about describing



people. They analyzed what the text about, they analyzed which one the identification and description. Then, because time is up, the teacher closed the learning activity and said Hamdallah together.

## **b. Second Meeting**

The researcher continued research for the second meeting on Thursday, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016. In the second meeting, the researcher observed the teaching and learning process in the class. In this meeting the teacher did introduction same with the first meeting. In that day from 22 students only 20 students were present on that day.

The teacher asked about the last material to begin the learning activity. Then, the teacher gave the example of descriptive text. When the teacher showed the example and re-explain about descriptive text, the researcher observe not all students gave their attention. There are some students play games in their phone in the under table, chatting with their friends, etc.

The researcher concluded, one of the factors why the students cannot give their attention or bored in learning activity because the teacher used lecturing method. It made students little bit not interest with learning activity. In teaching activity, the teacher teaches seriously, and it made students bored.

The next step, after explaining about descriptive text the teacher gave the assignment to write about their classmate on a paper. The teacher gave 25 minutes to write it. Then, some students presents about descriptive text based on their paper in front of the class.

After 25 minutes students collected the paper on the teacher's table. Then, students' present about their paper. The researcher seen their explanation is very short and less 200 words. But, according to the curriculum, the students were expected to write 350 words. It showed that the students have difficulties in developing ideas. Next, the researcher gave the questionnaire sheet after finished the learning activity.

## **2. The Tenth Graders Ability in Writing Descriptive Text**



The data presented in this study is based on the results of students' writing analysis and score. The researcher did this analysis at home, after the researcher got the students' writing from the second meeting.

**a. Finding from Score**

There are 20 students' writings that were collected in the second meeting. All writings have different scores. The lowest score is 58 and the highest score is 85, because many varieties of score, the researcher classified score into five categories. The first is very good, the second is good, the third is fair, the fourth is bad and the last is very bad. The researcher classified score to make easier to find out the ability of students in writing descriptive text.

There are 4 students got score under 60. Then, there are 14 students got score more than 60. Then, there are 2 students got score more than 80. It showed that many are students included into good categories, because they got score more than 60. So, the score showed that almost all of students have ability to write descriptive text, but they still have difficulties in writing descriptive text.

**b. Finding from Students' Text**

In this section the researcher analyzed ability of students based on students' text. There is 20 students' text that analyzed by researcher. It was collected in the second meeting.

There are some components of writing that used by the researcher to analyze students' text. They are developing ideas, organizing ideas, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics.

In terms of developing ideas, the ability of students that got scores more than 80 were good. So, the researcher concluded that their writing ability is limited in developing the ideas. In term of grammar, the researcher still found some mistakes in the students' writing. It might be because the students did not know about simple present tense. The students forgot to put *-s/-es* after pronoun, confuse between single and plural, pronoun and possessive pronoun, etc. So, the researcher concluded that the students' ability in grammar is low and they still have problem, because still found grammatical error.



In term of vocabulary, many of the students had poor choice of words. It is because many students write descriptive text still used Bahasa Indonesia. Stahl (2005:71) said that “Vocabulary is the knowledge of words and word meanings and also puts vocabulary knowledge as the knowledge of a word not only implies a definition, but also implies how that word fits into the context. In the mechanics term, the researcher can conclude that almost all of students able to put punctuation and capitalization correctly in their writing.

### **c. Discussion**

Based on the finding from score and finding from students’ text, the researcher will discuss the result in this part. In finding from score there are 4 students got score under 60. It included into fair category. There are 14 students got score less than 80. It included into good category. Then, there are 2 students got score more than 80 and it included into very good category. The score showed that almost students have good ability in writing descriptive text. It is because 14 students got score more than 60 and they include into good category.

Based on the explanation above, many students are able to write descriptive text, but some of students still have difficulties in writing descriptive text. So, they have to practice their writing skill not only at their school but also at their home.

### **3. The Difficulties are Reflected in the Tenth Graders Text**

The data presented in this study is based on the results of questionnaire and based on the result of students’ text analysis. The researcher did this analysis at home, after the researcher got the students’ writing in the second meeting.

#### **a. Finding from Questionnaire**

The researcher gave the 20 questionnaire sheets to the students in the second meeting, before the learning activity was done. The first question is whether the students like English, the second question asked about the first time students knew English subject, the third question asked about whether the students ever learn English at course, the fourth question asked about whether the students like writing, the fifth question told about their comprehensions in descriptive text and the sixth





question asked about students' comprehensions about characteristics of descriptive text.

The seventh question asked about the students' difficulties in writing descriptive text and the researcher found many responses about it, as follow:

- a. How to start write and how to generate the ideas.
- b. How to organize the ideas.
- c. How to find out the word in English.
- d. How to write by grammatical correct.

Next, for the eighth question asked about how the students improve their writing ability and ninth question asked how much time spent in a week to learn the English. Then, the tenth question asked about how often the students write in English.

#### **b. Finding from Students' Text**

In this section the researcher analyzed the difficulties of students based on students' text. There are 20 students' texts that analyzed by researcher.

There are some components of writing that are used by the researcher to analyze students' text. The first is developing ideas, the second is organizing ideas, the third is grammar, the fourth is vocabulary and the last is mechanics. In mechanics term the researcher analyze punctuation and capitalization of students' text.

Heaton (1975:138) argues that there are four skills necessary for writing. They are:  
a) Grammatical skill: The ability to write correct sentences. b) Stylistic skill: The ability to manipulate sentence and use language effectively. c) Mechanical skill: The ability to use correctly those conversations peculiar to the written language e.g. punctuation, and spelling. d) Judgment skill: The ability to write in an appropriate manner for a particular purpose with on ability to select, organize and relevant information.

After analyzing the students' text, the researcher found the difficulties of students in writing descriptive text based on five components. The difficulties elaborated below:

In texts of student 5 showed that developing idea was good. It is because the writer can write many words in their paper. This text also was good in organizing ideas, because in this there are identification and description. The identification of this text



described about his friend. The description of this text described the characteristics, parts or qualities of object.

In vocabulary, grammar and mechanics terms the mistakes in the first paragraph are *Her names* is Farhan Mulana. He is my classmate and he *is sit* beside me. *He is not short not tall*. He *is* oval face. He *is* black hair and black *eye*. I like *he*. *Because* he always *help* me. It should be *His name* is Farhan Mulana. He is my classmate and he *sits* beside me. *He has medium height*. He *has* oval face. He *has* black hair and black *eyes*. I like *him, because* he always *helps* me.

In the second paragraph the mistakes are He *is bron in 5 Agustus 1998*. He is 17 *year old*. *He hobby is* football, futsal and *voliball*. We always play football *together* in *we house*. *Because house Farhan dekat dengan saya*. *He is tetangga saya*. It should be He *was born on August, 5<sup>th</sup> 1998*. He is 17 *years old*. *His hobbies are* football, futsal and *volleyball*. We always play football *together* in *our house, because Farhan's house near with my house*. *He is my neighbor*.

In the texts of students 9 showed that developing idea was not good. It is because the writer cannot write many words in their paper. This text also was not good in organizing ideas, because the writer described the object generally and it is very simple. Although in this text consist of identification and description.

In texts of students 19 showed that developing idea was better. The writer can develop their idea well. It is because the writer writes many sentences in their paper. This text also was good in organizing ideas. They can organize their idea and in their text consist of identification and description in their paper.

In vocabulary, grammar and mechanics terms the mistakes in the first paragraph there are in the first, the second and the fourth sentences. The mistakes are I have a *fiends*. He is *septian nugraha*. He *sit* beside me in the class. It should be I have a *fiend*. He is *Septian Nugraha*. He *sits* beside me in the class. In the second paragraph the mistakes there is in the third sentences, the mistakes is *He is a smart and friendly*. It should be *He is a smart person and friendly*.

In the third paragraph the mistakes there is in the last sentences. The mistakes are all people in school know him, because he is active in school and he is confidence in every *chance*. It should be all people in *the* school know him, because he is active in *the* school and he is confidence in every *opportunity*.



### **c. Discussion**

Based on finding from questionnaire and finding from the students' text the researcher will discuss the result in this part. In finding from the questionnaire the researcher concluded that from all questions in the questionnaire except number seven are the factor that caused the students difficult to write descriptive text. Then, in the seventh question the researcher find out the similar difficulties in writing descriptive text with the component of writing that analyzed by the researcher.

After analyzing the all students' texts, the researcher found the biggest problem or the biggest students' difficulties in writing descriptive text. The difficulties are in developing idea and in organizing idea. It is because all students write few paragraphs. In grammar, vocabulary and mechanics also still any mistakes, but the mistakes are not significant. If they often practice to write English text, they writing skill will increase.

### **Conclusion**

There are some conclusions got from this research. From the observation result, the researcher concluded that the teacher teach descriptive text was good, but during learning activity, the teacher used lecturing method that can make the students bored. So, in the learning activity the teacher and students there is no eye contact or well communication. Furthermore, the text analysis is revealed that almost all the students showed their good ability in writing descriptive based on the text they wrote, such as present tense, linking verbs, and adjectives. On the other hand, the texts also bring the facts about the problems faced by students in writing.

### **Suggestion**

Based on the findings and conclusion of the research, the researcher would like to give some suggestions. The researcher suggests that the teacher has to mix the learning activity with a game, song, and give motivation to make the learning activity become fun and alive, the teacher should help the students to compose good texts by giving various ways to develop their ideas and organizing ideas, the teacher provide time to the student for practicing their writing skill, and the teacher brainstorm the ideas and make an outline



before come to writing activities. Outline will help the student to organize and develop their ideas well. Then, the suggestion for other researcher who will conduct further research about descriptive writing can analyze more detail about this skill.



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