

Some Difficulties Faced by Grade Seven Students of MTS. Al-Haq Palu in Writing Descriptive Text

Kesulitan yang Dihadapi oleh Siswa Kelas Tujuh di MTS. Al-Haq Palu dalam Menulis Deskriptif Teks

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to investigate the writing problems faced by grade seven students of MTS. Al-Haq Palu. This research applied descriptive method. The subject was grade seven students of MTS. Al-Haq Palu, with 21 students taken from one class by using total sampling technique. The data of the research were collected by carrying out the test, interview, and questionnaire. The result of this research indicates that the students faced many problems which include (1) they were lack of vocabulary; (2) they got difficulty to explore their ideas; (3) they could not choose appropriate words; and (4) they could not use spelling and punctuation well.

Key words: *Difficulties; Writing; Descriptive Text*

Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui masalah menulis yang dihadapi oleh siswa MTs. Al-Haq Palu. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif. Subjek penelitian adalah siswa kelas tujuh MTs. Al-Haq Palu, dengan jumlah 21 siswa yang diambil dari satu kelas dengan menggunakan teknik total sampling. Data penelitian dikumpulkan dengan melakukan tes, wawancara, dan daftar pertanyaan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa siswa menghadapi banyak masalah yang meliputi 1 mereka kekurangan kosakata; 2 mereka kesulitan untuk mengembangkan ide mereka; 3 mereka tidak dapat menggunakan kata dengan tepat; dan 4 mereka tidak dapat menggunakan pengejaan dan tanda baca dengan baik.

Kata kunci: Kesulitan, Menulis, Deskriptif Teks.

INTRODUCTION

Language is a communication tool that we often use in daily life. Language occurs because of social interaction from one person to another. However, not all the languages we convey can be understood by others. Sometimes, we make mistakes in language both in speaking and writing.

Writing is one of the language skills to communicate with each other. Through writing, someone can convey ideas and opinions. According to Goldstein (2008), language as a system of communication using sounds or symbols enables us to express our feelings, thoughts, ideas, and experiences.

In writing, there are many aspects we must note that our writing can be understood by the reader. The aspect have an important role in our writing later, such as organization, content, grammar, mechanic, and style. Therefore, our writing can be well structured. Thus, the reader will easily read and understand what we have written. Through writing the researcher expects that specially for Junior School students are able to do writing activity specially in writing descriptive text.

According to the competency of 2013 curriculum, the goal of teaching learning English at Junior High School is that the students should be able to develop communicative competence in written as well as in spoken to achieve functional literacy level. Based on the curriculum, the students are taught by using text as media. There are some kinds of texts that have to be learnt by grade seven of Junior High School, one of the texts is descriptive text.

Descriptive text is a kind of text which describes what a person or a thing like that it is described specifically. Descriptive text is meaningful text that describes the experience related to the sense, such as what a shape, sound, tastes, and look is. The purpose of descriptive text is to explain, describe, or express someone or an object.

To be able to write well and correctly, it seems very difficult especially for the researcher personally. Considering when the researcher was in junior high school, the researcher had difficulty in writing. Not only the researcher but some of the researcher's friends has the same experience. Because at that time, generating the idea into the form of writing is very difficult. We faced that we were not be able to write even in simple sentences at Junior High School.

We need to master writing in order to develop our ideas, especially for students. They need to mastering writing activities at school. Hyland (2002) states that writing is an activity which must be mastered in order for students to express their ideas effectively in writing. So, in our activities especially at college, we always do writing activities.

The importance of choosing an interesting topic in writing is necessary. The writing that we produce can attract readers. However, writing is a very difficult activity especially for junior high school students. In fact, they still cannot write well and correctly.

Based on the observation, the researcher intends to find out some students' difficulties related to the teaching learning process of writing. In writing, English language has many kinds of genre, such as narrative, descriptive, procedure, recount, etc. The researcher will choose descriptive text in her research because she is interested in finding out students' difficulties in writing descriptive text of grade seven of students MTs. Al-Haq Palu. She found that some of students could not write simple sentence in descriptive text. Their teacher said the students did not understand the meaning of the word, and lack of vocabulary.

Based on the background explained, the researcher formulated the research question as follows: "What are the difficulties faced by grade seven students of MTs. Al-Haq Palu in writing descriptive text ?" The objective of this research is to find out the difficulties faced by grade students of MTs. Al-Haq Palu in writing descriptive text.

The researcher presents two previous studies that are related to the recent study about the difficulties in writing descriptive text in writing skills.

The previous studies were conducted by Husna, Zainil, and Rozimela (2013), An Analysis of students' writing skill in descriptive text at grade XI IPA 1 of MAN 2 Padang and Choir (2016), A study on the tenth grade students problems in writing descriptive text at Islamic Senior High School (MAN) Rejoso Petorongan Jombang.

First, Husna, Zainil, and Rozimela (2013) focused on an analysis of students' writing skill. The result of her research is that the students faced difficulties in organizing and developing ideas. They are not able to develop ideas in the text they write.

The second study was done by Choir (2016) who described students problems in writing descriptive text. The result of his study is most of some tenth grade students cannot made a descriptive paragraph clearly.

Two previous studies and the research conducted equally examine the difficulties faced by students, especially in writing a descriptive text. The researcher conducted her research to find out what students' difficulties faced in writing a descriptive text.

Comparing to the previous studies explained before, we found differences and similarities. The similarity is this study also applied research about a descriptive text. The differences is the object of the research. In this research, the researcher used grade seven students.

METHOD

The research is designed to find out the students' difficulties in writing descriptive text. By doing this, the researcher identified the difficulties in writing. Thus, this research employs descriptive research. The population of this research was grade seven students of MTs. Al-Haq Palu. The population consist of one class. The number of population are 21 students. The researcher used total sampling technique in this research. The sample of this research is one class. It means the total of sample was 21 students.

FINDINGS

Findings of Test

The results from the students' test are all of students got difficulty in writing descriptive text. The teacher said that students had problem in writing. The students had of lack vocabulary. So, they found it difficult to start their writing. When they started writing, they found that it is hard to develop ideas on topic that is given by their teacher. In the test, there are five aspects that the researcher used to get results from the students, namely : content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Besides, the aspect of vocabulary and organization (how the students develop their ideas), indeed the students also had difficulties in the other three aspects like content, grammar, and mechanics.

From twenty one students become the sample, seventeen students shows the first problem "the topic is complete and clear but the details are almost relating to the topic" in their test. Fifteen students got the second problem "organization of idea and description is not complete and clear". All of the students got the third problem "very poor knowledge of words and not understandable". Thirteen students got the fourth problem "it is dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization" are problems faced by them in writing descriptive text.

Findings of the Interview

The researcher interviewed the English teacher and 21 students to get accurate data to support this research. The interview consisted of five questions. The results of the teacher's interview, can be seen below.

Problem in learning English

The English teacher said the main and the first problem in learning English is the students had lack of vocabulary. They need lots of vocabulary when writing. The teacher said "teaching writing to grade seven students is rather difficult because the students have just graduated from elementary school.

Students' problems in learning writing

The first problem faced by the students in writing is that there is still lack of vocabulary that is owned by the students. The teacher said that the students have given extra time to the students before they asked the students to write in the whiteboard. The teacher has explained well and clearly how to make descriptive paragraph. After that, the teacher gave task to the students related to descriptive paragraph and asked the students to write the results of their task on the whiteboard. Their teacher said that the students had difficulty to describe the topic given to them because they had lack of vocabulary. Meanwhile, they also felt shy to write their task in front of the other students. They were afraid that there was wrong words in writing sentences. Furthermore, they had difficulty for choosing the right words which is used in the sentences. They did not know to spell words and use punctuation

correctly. The teacher said that she/he has told to the students in order to read well what their friends have written. The students also asked by the teacher to do not laughing at their friends if their friends did mistake in writing.

Activities carried out in learning writing descriptive text

In this section, before starting further about what descriptive paragraph is, first the teacher explained the example of simple paragraph in English. Then, the students were directed and taught how to make descriptive paragraph and how to construct paragraph based on what their teacher has explained. Their teacher taught the students to make a sentence using the things or something that they usually use or see in their daily life.

The media used by the teachers in teaching writing descriptive text

The teachers have their own method and ways of teaching the students. Likewise, media used for learning process aims to provide a good understanding for the students. In this part, the English teacher said they usually use serial picture and interesting objects that are around the students in order to make the students more understand in learning English quickly.

Students in writing class

The teacher said that the students felt enjoyed when they learned English in the class. The students are very enthusiastic when the English subject will begin. The participation of students in learning descriptive paragraph is good. They respond well when the teacher explained.

Students' interest in English

The first question is "do you like English?" then, the answer is almost all the students' answered that they liked English. They answered that they were happy with English. They were very excited when the English teacher entered their class. When learning process, the students always asked their teacher about things that they did not know especially in learning to write descriptive text.

The most difficult skills in English

The second question is "in learning English, what skills do you find the most difficult to master?" Three of the twenty-one students answered that reading was the most difficult skill for them to master while eighteen students answered that writing was the most difficult skill to master. The results shows that more half of the students said they had difficulty in writing skills and only three students said that they had difficulty in reading skill. The result of the students' interview shows that more than half students have difficulties in writing, in this case writing in descriptive text.

The difficulty in learning skill in English

The third question is "what are the difficulties in learning the skills". In this part, the skill referred to writing skill. Based on the result of the students' interviewing answer about question number two, they answered reading and writing. The students said that they had difficulty in translating. It is caused of the lack of vocabulary. They felt very hard to develop the topics that was given by the teacher. They felt hard and confused to start what will be written.

Students' opinion in writing descriptive text

The fourth question is "what do you think about writing subject in English class, specially in writing descriptive text". The students responded that they felt hard. They got difficulty to begin how to pour their thoughts with the topics that is provided. Their teacher said that the students must prepare a dictionary for the English subject. It can make them easy to start writing and translating vocabulary they did not know.

Obstacles encountered in English

The last question is "what are the obstacles you faced in learning writing skill in English, specially in writing descriptive text". When the researcher asked this question, the students answered that they had lack of vocabulary in writing, so that is why they found difficult to begin writing. They

felt hard when developing their ideas. The researcher concludes that the result of the teacher's interview and the students' interview has the same result.

Findings of Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of ten questions already distributed to the students. The first question is about their interest in English.

The first question shows that almost all of the students like English. No one students chose "dislike". No one chose "less like". Four students chose "quite like". Seventeen students pick "strongly like". It means most of the students like English.

The second question is about how important writing skill in English. It shows no one students pick "not important". No one students pick "less important". Five students pick "important". Sixteen students picked "strongly important". It means have writing skill in English is strongly important for the students.

The third question is about the students' ability in writing. No one students chose "unable". Nineteen students chose "less able". There were two students chose "able" and no one students chose "strongly able". The data shows that the students' ability in writing especially in descriptive text is very low.

The fourth question is about the students' motivation in writing. No one student chose "no". No one student chose "less". No one students chose "enough" and twenty one students chose "yes". The question shows that most of students were motivated in writing.

The fifth question is about level of difficulty of writing. No one students selected "not at all (no difficulties)". No one students selected "medium (quite difficulty)". No one students chose "low (easy)" and twenty one students selected "high (hard)". The question shows seventeen students said that writing in English is quite difficult.

The sixth question is about the topics that students like in English. Two students chose "the topic related to science and technology". No one students selected "the topic related to education". No one students chose "the topic related to social life" and nineteen students selected "the topic related to daily life". The question shows almost all students pick "the topic related to daily life", it means students prefer writing topics related to their daily life.

The seventh question is about learning inputs that the students like to write. No one students selected "banners, posters, and pamphlets". Two students selected "newspaper, magazines, and other print medias". No one students chose "articles" and seventeen students selected "pictures". The question shows nineteen students chose picture as input they like in learning writing.

The eighth question is the difficulties encountered by students in writing. No one students selected "do not know the criteria of writing in good English". No one students selected "the use of grammar in English". Fourteen students chose "low of vocabulary mastery" and no one students selected "confused what to write (no ideas)". The data shows that many students had low vocabulary mastery.

The ninth question is about practice writing outside the classroom. No one students selected "never". Seventeen students selected "rarely". Two students selected "occasionally" and two students selected "often". The data shows most of students rarely practice writing in English outside the classroom.

The last question is about activities given by the teacher to train the students' ability. No one students pick "making stories". Two students pick "making paragraphs with the topics are determined by students". Two students pick "making paragraphs with topics are determined by the teacher" and seventeen students pick "writing about personal experience". The data shows thirteen students pick "writing about personal experience", it means that students prefer write based on their personal experience.

DISCUSSION

Generally in writing, there is relation among data from the test, the teacher and the students' interview, and the students' questionnaire. Related to the first research question, the results of the test indicated that there are some problems that faced by the students in writing descriptive text. The trigger that cause the students got difficulty in writing descriptive text is the lack of vocabulary they have. It cause some difficulties faced by the students in their test result, such as the first problem is the

teacher said that the students were lack of vocabulary. The second is they felt difficult to explore their ideas. Besides, lack of vocabulary and difficult to explore the ideas, they could not chose the appropriate words when starting to write. They could not use spelling and punctuation well.

The findings from the interviews between the teacher and the students shows relationship each other. In the teacher's interview, the data shows that the teacher said the first problem is their students have lack of vocabulary. It was related from the first research question, and the question is problem in learning English. The teacher's response was that their students had lack of vocabulary and students were still weak in writing. In the students' interview, the students responded the question from researcher, and they said that writing in descriptive text is so hard for them. It is caused many of them had lack of vocabulary. In the second question about "in learning English, what skills do you find the most difficult?". Then they said that writing skill is most difficult than the other skill because it is so hard for them to start writing.

The results from the students' questionnaire were nearly the same as from the teachers' interviews. Besides, they had lack of vocabulary, they said that they were afraid that there was wrong words in writing. They had difficulty for choosing the words that used and they did not know how to use spelling and punctuation well.

In general, from the results of the investigation, it was evident that the students faced some difficulties in writing. The main problem is lack of vocabulary. Moreover, there are many problems in writing descriptive text. Bryne (1988) argues the writing difficulties related to the linguistic difficulty (in language use and vocabulary aspects) is the most and dominant difficult aspect for the students. There are some recommendations for the English teacher such as the teacher should be able to improve the students' writing skill, especially in writing descriptive text and find appropriate method to improve the students' vocabulary. On the whole, the current teaching and learning of writing skills especially in writing descriptive text at MTs. Al-Haq Palu need to be improved.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This research aims to investigate the difficulties faced by grade seven students of MTs. Al-Haq Palu in writing descriptive text. The researcher found that the students faced many problems that are (1) they are lack of vocabulary; (2) they got difficulty to explore their ideas; (3) they are not able to choose appropriate words; and (4) they are not able to use spelling and punctuation well.

Based on the results of the research, there are some recommendations made for both the teachers and the students at MTs. Al-Haq Palu. First, the teacher should be able to improve the students' writing skill, especially in writing descriptive text and find appropriate method to improve the students' vocabulary. Second, the teacher are expected to develop creativity in making and using learning media that are able to develop the students' creativity in writing. Third, the teacher are expected to be able to find a method that is suitable with the material being taught, but does not saturate the students by using monotonous method.

For the students, first they should understand the importance of writing skills. Second, they should practice more how to write English paragraph well especially writing descriptive text, even when there is no class. They will be able to understand easily. Finally, they should to improve their vocabulary so, they will be easier to write by having a lot of vocabulary. Hopefully, the research can contribute to the improvement of English teaching and learning at MTs. Al-Haq Palu.

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