

AN ANALYSIS ON THE STUDENTS' GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT AT THE SECOND YEAR OF SMPN 31 PADANG

Ade Ervindo¹, Drs. Khairul Harha, M.Sc.¹, Dra. Lisa Tavriyanti, M.Pd.²

¹English Department, The Faculty of Teacher Training And Education of Bung Hatta University

E-mail : ervindo.ade@gmail.com

² English Department, The Faculty of Teacher Training And Education of Bung Hatta University

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to describe the grammatical errors made by the students in writing descriptive text. Descriptive text is a kind of text that is used to describe a place, a person and any other subjects. Descriptive text is one of the texts studied by the second year students of junior high school. The researcher used descriptive design in this research. The population of this research was the second year students of SMPN 31 Padang. The total number of population was 234. They were distributed into eight classes; VIII 1, VIII 2, VIII 3, VIII 4, VIII 5, VIII 6, VIII 7 and VIII 8. In selecting the sample, the resercher used cluster random sampling technique. The number of sample was 29 students. The instrument used to collect the data was writing test. The researcher found the reliability of the test by using Pearson Product Moment formula. It was found that the reliability index of this test was 0.89. The result of the data analysis showed the grammatical errors made by the second year students of SMP 31 Padang in writing descriptive text telling a person. Specifically, the researcher found that 30.12% students made grammatical errors in omission, 14.93% students made grammatical errors in addition, 3.4% students made errors in misinformation, and 5.15% students made errors in misordering. Based on that findings it could be concluded that some second year students at SMPN 31 Padang made grammatical errors in writing descriptive text about telling a person. They made errors in omission, addition, misinformation and misordering. In line with the suggestion of this research, the students need to practice more in writing so that they can be aware of making grammatical errors in their writing especially in telling a person.

Key Words : Analysis, Grammatical Errors, Descriptive Text

A. Introduction

In learning English, there are four basic skills that must be mastered, and one of them is writing skill. Writing skill is the ability to express ideas or feeling, perception and point of view in writing

form. Writing is one of the language skills that should be possessed by the students. By writing, the students can express their thoughts, ideas and feelings to the readers. It is a recording process to put a message into word (Bryne 1993:138). In other words, writing is one of the ways of

expressing ideas or feeling in our minds. So, writing is one of media that we can use to express ideas if we cannot do it orally.

Based on curriculum 2006 (KTSP), there are several kinds of writing text that have to be introduced at junior high school, such as narrative, descriptive, argumentative and exposition. Descriptive text is one of the texts that studied by the second year students of junior high school. Descriptive text is a kind of writing that expresses the ideas to describe something, people or place.

Descriptive text has the component such as, the generic structure and the language features.

Besides, the students should understand language components that build their communication in English well. Those components are grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. All of these components should be considered in writing. It means that to make a good writing, the students should have the basic knowledge in grammar, vocabulary, organizing idea, spelling and punctuation. All of them are essential aspects that should be considered in producing good

writing. The act of writing requires the writer to formulate ideas, organize, sequence points in logical order, select vocabulary, check for grammatical correctness, spell words correctly, punctuate and write legibly.

In fact, based on the informal interview that the researcher did toward the second year students of SMPN 31 Padang and based on the corrections given by the English teacher, he found that many students still made grammatical errors in writing descriptive text. They did not add ending s/es to the verb if the subject is the third singular person. For example, they wrote “she look like her mother” instead of “she looks like her mother.” It means that they did not understand to apply the correct grammar rules in their writing task. In other words, students made the grammatical errors which created some misinterpretation to get the meaning for some readers.

Considering the problem above, the researcher would like to conduct a research

entitled “An Analysis on the Students’ Grammatical Errors in Writing Descriptive Text at the Second Year of SMPN 31 Padang”.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher used descriptive design in this research. The aim of using this design was to describe the types of grammatical error made by second year students of SMPN 31 Padang in writing descriptive text. Gay (1987: 189) states that descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypothesis or answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study. The researcher did not manipulate occurring phenomena because this research is categorized as descriptive research. Seliger and Shohamy (1989) states that descriptive research is used to specify, imagine or describe naturally occurring phenomena without experimental manipulation. This design was used because this study was aimed to describe the grammatical errors

made by the second students in writing descriptive texts.

According to Arikunto (2002: 108), population is all of the research subjects. Population is the group of interest to the researcher, the group to which she or he would like the results of the study to be generalizable (Gay, 1989: 102). The second grade students of SMPN 31 Padang who registered in the year 2012/2013 were chosen as the population of the research because based on the recent curriculum they had learned about descriptive text and how to write it. Therefore, they have competence in writing descriptive text. Total number of the second grade students of SMPN 31 Padang was 234 students.

Sampling is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals represent the larger group referred to as a population (Gay 1987: 101). The researcher applied cluster random sampling technique. According to Gay (1987: 110), cluster random sampling is a

sampling technique in which group, not individuals, are randomly selected. The researcher used cluster sampling technique because the members of population were distributed in group or classes. He used cluster random sampling technique because the population was in homogeneous condition, such as they had same curriculum, syllabus, materials and teacher in learning writing subject.

In selecting the sample, the researcher followed the following procedures. First, he wrote the name of classes on small pieces of paper and then, he put them in a box. After mixing them up, he took one of pieces of paper with closed eyes. The select class became the class sample and all member of class sample became the sample of this research. Finally, the researcher got VIII 2 as samples of this research.

Writing test was used as the instrument for this research. The students were required to write descriptive text about telling a person by giving direction

and instruction. The text that students wrote should consists of identification and description. The students did the writing test in 60 minutes

A good test should be valid and reliable. A test is valid if it measures what is supposed to be a measured (Gay, 1987:128). The validity of test represents the extent to which a test measures what is to be measured. According to Arikunto (2012: 67), one of the types of test validity is content validity. Test valid if it fixes with the material that has been given to the students. To do so, this test was constructed based on curriculum and teaching materials used at SMPN 31 Padang.

Gay (1987: 162) states that reliability is the degree to which a test consistently measures. To find out the reliability of this test the researcher used interater techniques. It means that there were two assessors to analyze students' writing. The first assessor was the researcher and the second assessor was

Ridho Fajri. The criteria of choosing second assessor was that he was good in grammar and writing. Besides, two assessor method was used to minimize the subjectivity.

The researcher used Pearson Product Moment formula to find out the coefficient correlation between scores given by the two assessors.

$$r_{xy} = \frac{N \sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{\{n \sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2\} \{n \sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2\}}}$$

Where :

r_{xy} = the coefficient correlation between x and y variables

n = the number of the students who follow the test

x = the number of errors that is identified by first researcher

y = the number of errors that is identified by second researcher

$\sum x$ = first assessor

$\sum y$ = second assessor

$\sum xy$ = total number of errors that is identified by first and second assessor.

Gay (1987: 367) says that the value of r counted is consulted to the value of r table on the freedom N-2 and alpha 0.5 and if r counted > r table, the test is reliable, but if r counted < r table, so the test is not reliable. Based on the result of analysis of reliability index of this test, it was found that the reliability index was 0.89. It means the test was reliable.

The data of this research were students grammatical errors in writing descriptive text. To collect the data, the researcher followed the following procedures:

1. The assessor collected the students work.
2. The first assessor copied students' work and gave it to second assessor. The original one is for the first assessor.

3. The assessors checked the errors found in the students' work by underlying the errors the students made.

4. The first and the second assessor identified the types of grammatical errors made by the students based on the criteria.

5. Then, the assessors gave checklist “√” to the kinds of grammatical errors made by the students in writing descriptive text.

In analyzing the data, the researcher analyzed the students grammatical errors by using the following steps:

1. The researcher counted each student's grammatical error
2. The researcher used the formula below in counting the percentage of the students grammatical error:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where:

P = the percentage of students grammatical error

F = frequency of students grammatical error

N = total number of students

3. Finally, the researcher described the conclusion.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the findings, the researcher found out omission, addition, misformation and misordering errors made by the second year students' at SMPN 31 Padang in writing descriptive text about telling a person. In term of omission errors, they had errors in omission of plurality -s, omission of s/es as third singular person, omission of be and omission of article. In term of addition error, they had error in addition of verb form, addition of article and addition of auxiliary verb. Then in term of misformation error, they had error in misformation of auxiliary verb. While in

term of misordering error, they had error in misordering of modal auxiliary and misordering of adjective.

After analyzing the data, the researcher found that 30.12% students made errors in omission. There are five types of grammatical error in omission. They are omission of plurality -s, omission of -s /es as third singular person, omission of be and omission of article.

- **Omission of plurality -s**

Based on the result of the data analysis, the researcher found that 14 out of 29 students (48.2%) omitted ending -s in plural noun. It means that they still did not understand well the importance of ending -s in a noun to show plurality.

- **Omission of -s/es as third singular person**

Based on the result of the data analysis, the researcher found that 7 out of 29 students (24.1%) omitted -s/es as third singular person in writing descriptive text about telling a person. It indicates that it is difficult for them to make the differences

in using simple past tense and simple present tense. It means that few students still did not understand well about the use of s/es as third singular person.

- **Omission of be**

Based on the result of the data analysis, the researcher found that 7 out of 29 students (24.1%) omitted be in their sentences. It means that few students still did not understand about use of be in nominal sentence.

- **Omission of article**

Based on the result of the data analysis, the researcher found that 7 out of 29 students (24.1%) omitted article in writing descriptive text telling a person. It means that few students still did not understand about the use of article.

After analyzing the data, the researcher found that 14.93% students made errors in addition. In addition error, the researcher grouped this error into three kinds as follows:

- **Addition of verb form**

Based on the result of the data analysis, the researcher found that 10 out of 29 students (34.5%) added verb form in their sentence while writing descriptive text about telling a person. It means that few students still did not understand about the use verb form in writing descriptive text.

- **Addition of article**

Based on the result of the data analysis, the researcher found that 2 out of 29 students (6.9 %) of the sample add of article in their sentence while writing descriptive text about telling a person. It means most of the students have understood in using article.

- **Addition of auxiliary verb**

Based on the result of the data analysis, the researcher found that 1 out of 29 students (3.4%) added auxiliary verb in their sentence while writing descriptive text about telling a person. It means most of the students have understood in using auxiliary verb.

After analyzing the data, the researcher found 3.4% students made errors in misinformation. This is the smallest number of errors made by the students among two others. The kinds of misinformation error made by the students are as follows:

- **Misinformation of auxiliary verb**

Based on the result of the data analysis, the researcher found that 1 out of 29 students (3.4%) had misinformation of auxiliary verb in their sentence while writing descriptive text about telling a person. It means most of the students have understood in using auxiliary verb.

After analyzing the data, the researcher found that 5.15% students made errors in misordering. The kinds of misordering error made by the students are as follows:

- **Misordering of modal auxiliary**

Based on the result of the data analysis, the researcher found that 1 out of

29 students (3.4%) had misordering of modal auxiliary in their sentence while writing descriptive text about telling a person. It means most of the students have understood in using modal auxiliary.

• **Misordering of adjective**

Based on the result of the data analysis, the researcher found that 2 out of 29 students (6.9%) had misordering of adjective in their sentences while writing descriptive text about telling a person. It means most of the students have understood in using modal auxiliary.

Discussions

As it is already discussed previously, one of the findings of this study is that the students made omission errors in writing descriptive text about telling a person. Dulay, Burt and Krashen in James (1982:50) state that one of kinds of the grammatical errors usually made by the students is omission.

• **Omission of Plurality –s**

Grammatical error in omission of plurality –s is the kind of grammatical

error made by many second year students (48.2%) in writing descriptive text telling a person. Such grammatical error made by students in plurality indicates that the students still have limited knowledge of making plural nouns. Some examples of error in omission of plurality –s are given below:

- kitty doll (error s1)
- kitty dolls (correct)
- some game (error S2)
- some games (correct)
- two cow (error S7)
- two cows (correct)
- many book (error S19)
- many books (correct)
- some friend (error S15)
- some friends (correct)
- some ball (error S19)
- some balls (correct)
- different place (error S27)
- different places (correct)

• **Omission of s/es as third singular person**

Another finding of this study was that 24.1% students made omission error in s/es as third singular person. It implies that most of the students still got confused about using s/es as third singular person. In other words, they have implemented the correct grammatical rules in English starting that if the subject of a sentence is the third singular person, the verb should have ending s/es. Some examples of omission s/es as third singular person are given below:

- My mother cook (error S4)
- My mother cooks (correct)
- He put the ball (error S13)
- He puts the balls (correct)

• Omission of be

The other finding of this study was that 24.1% of the second year students' made grammatical error on omission of be in writing descriptive text about telling a person. It means that some students still made mistakes in using be in sentence. In order to make a grammatically correct sentence, the students should use be after

subject and followed by complement after be. Some examples of students' error in the use of be are as follow:

- I very embarrass (error S1)
- I'm very embarrass (correct)
- Her name Ulfa (error S8)
- Her name is Ulfa (correct)
- That my name (error S13)
- That is my name (correct)

• Omission of article

Another finding of this study was that 24.1% students made error in omission of article. It means some students still made mistakes in using article. As you know, article 'a' is used if it is followed with words beginning with consonant sounds. Article 'an' is used if it is followed with word beginning with vowel sounds. Here are some examples of omission article as follows:

- I have sister (error S1)
- I have a sister (correct)
- Jae Bum is actor (error S4)

- Jae Bum is an actor (correct)
- She is idol (error S8)
- She is an idol (correct)
- She is actress (error S11)
- She is an actress (correct)

Grammatical Error by Addition

Dulay, Burt and Krashen (in James 1982:50) state that the students not only error in omission, but also the students usually made error in addition. The addition is adding something that no need or not important for the sentence.

• Addition of verb form

Based on the result of this study, there were 34.5% students making grammatical errors in addition verb form. It means that some students did not understand in using verb form. In order to make a grammatically correct sentence, the students should use verb after subject and they also have to write be after subject. Some examples of addition verb form are given below:

- I do don't care about that (error S2)

- I don't care about that (correct)
- I am are thirteen years old (error S6)
- I am thirteen years old (correct)

• Addition of article

Another findings of this study was that 6.9% students made errors in addition of article. It means a few students still got confused about using article in sentence. As you know, article 'a' is used if it is followed with words beginning with consonant sounds. Article 'an' is used if it is followed with word beginning with vowel sounds. The examples of addition article are below:

- I have an sister (error S1)
- I have a sister (correct)
- She is a good as example to me (error S5)
- She is as good example to me (correct)

• Addition of auxiliary verb

As already discussed, this study also found that 3.4% of the second year

students made grammatical error in addition of auxiliary verb. It means that a few students still got confused about using auxiliary verb. According to English grammatical rule, auxiliary verb should be placed before main verb and it functions to modify the meaning of main verb. For example of addition auxiliary verb, one as follows:

- I am do finish my homework (S 28 error)
- I do finish my homework (correct)

Grammatical Error by Misformation

Misformation is also kind of grammatical error made by the second year students in writing descriptive text about telling a person. It is related to Dulay, Burt and Krashen's opinion in James (1982:50) that state misformation happens if incorrect place wrong order of items.

• Misformation of auxiliary verb

As already discussed, this study also found that 3.4% of the second year

students made grammatical error in misformation of auxiliary verb. It means that a few students still got confused about using auxiliary verb. According to English grammatical rule, auxiliary verb should be placed before main verb and it functions to modify the meaning of main verb. Examples of misformation of auxiliary verb is as follow:

- The superman flying is in the sky (error S7)
- The superman is flying in the sky (correct)

Grammatical Error by Misordering

Misordering is also kind of grammatical error made by the second year students in writing descriptive text about telling a person. It is related Dulay, Burt and Krashen' opinion in James (1982:50) state that misordering happens if the word or phrase is incorrect place.

• Misordering of modal auxiliary

Another findings of this study was that 3.4% students made grammatical error in misordering of modal auxiliary in

writing descriptive text about telling a person. It means that some students still got confused about using modal auxiliary. In using modal auxiliary, the students should place modal after subject and it is followed by verb 1. Here is an example of misordering modal auxiliary:

- My father read may this book
(error S8)
- My father may read this book
(correct)

• Misordering of adjective

The last finding of this study was that 6.9% students made grammatical error in misordering of adjective in writing descriptive text about telling a person. It means that some students still got confused about using adjective. To make a correct sentence by using adjective, the students should use adjective before be. Some example of misordering adjective are given as follows:

- What is colour his hair? (error S6)

- What colour is his hair?
(correct)
- What is colour fur her? (error S7)
- What colour is her fur?
(correct)

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on the findings and discussions in previous chapter, the researcher concluded that:

1. The second year students at SMPN 31 Padang made grammatical errors' in writing descriptive text about telling a person.
2. The students made errors in kind of omission, addition, misformation and misordering.
3. After analyzing the data, the researcher found that 30.12% students made errors in omission.
4. After analyzing the data, the researcher found that 14.93% students made errors in addition.

5. After analyzing the data, the researcher found 3.4% students made errors in misformation.
6. Last, after analyzing the data, the researcher found that 5.15% students made errors in misordering.

Suggestions

Based on the conclusions, the researcher would like to give some suggestions as follows:

- Students need to practice more in writing so that the students can avoid of making grammatical errors in their writing descriptive text in telling a person.
- The next researchers are suggested to study the causes making students make grammatical errors in writing.
- For the teachers, they knew the types of grammatical errors that the students made in writing descriptive text and this empiric

information can be useful for them to guide their students to minimize the grammatical errors that are probably made by the students.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, Marilyn. 2005. *Keys to Successful Writing*. New York: Elcamino College.
- Alexander, L.G. 1979. *Essay and Letter Writing*. Singapore: ShingLoong Printing Industries Pte Ltd.
- Arikunto, Suharsimi. 2012. *Prosedur Penelitian Suatu Pendekatan Praktek*. Jakarta: PT. Rineka Cipta
- Azar, B. S. 1989. *Understanding and Using English Grammar*. New Jersey: Prentice –Hall Inc.
- Byrne, D.1993. *Teaching Writing Skills*. Singapore : Longman Group Ltd.
- Carino, Peter. 1995. *A First Course: Basic Writing*. New York: Monarach Press.
- Duigu, Gabi. 2002. *Essay Writing for English Test*. Australia: Academic English Press.
- Harris. D P. 1979. *Testing English as A Second Language*. New Delhi: Tata Macgraw Hill – Publishing Company. Ltd
- Herber. J. Seliger&Shohamy Elena. 1989. *Second Language Research Method*. Great Clarendon Street: Oxford University Press.

Hughes, J. 1991. *Writing Up Research*. California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc.

James, Carl. (1998). *Errors in Language Learning and Use: Exploring Error Analysis*. New York: Longman.

Gay, Lorrie. R.1987. *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Application*. Third Edition. Ohio : Merrill Publishing Company

Morgan & Claypool. 2010. *Automated Grammatical Error Detection For Language Learners*. GraemeHirst: University of Toronto.

Raja, T. Nasr. 1988. *Grammar Practice Activities*. London: Cambridge University.

Thornbury, S. 1999. *How to Teach Grammar*. Harlow: Longman.