

Analysis of Generic Structure and Grammatical Problem of Students in Writing English Paragraphs in Online Learning

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Abstract: The purpose of this research is to find out the generic structure and grammatical problems encountered by the non-English students at Muhammadiyah University of Riau. The data was obtained through students' writing task namely writing English paragraphs of descriptive text. The writing task was given through Learning System Management (LSM) of the university named *Sikuli*. The participants of this research were the Non-English students taking the English subject in the first semester in academic year of 2021/2022. The samples were 4 classes taken randomly spreading in eight faculties: Computer Science (40), Communication Science (28), Natural Science and Health (45), and Teacher Training and Education (25). The total number of students are 138. The researchers applied the theory of Gerot and Wignel (1994) and Halliday et al. (2014) from the perspective of systemic functional linguistics. In generic structure, the appropriateness and inappropriateness in formulating identification and descriptions in descriptive text were described. In grammatical case, the writing were analyzed based on the theory proposed by Yarber and Yarber (2010) and Dye (2005). After the data was analyzed, the results showed that the students got serious problem on writing identification (115/83%) as one of the generic structure in descriptive text. In addition, they also encountered grammatical problems such as noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, parallelism, modifiers, subject-verb agreement, punctuation, and capitalization. Based on the numbers and the percentage of the grammatical problems above, it showed that the students got serious problem on subject-verb agreement (129/14, 16%).

Keywords: *Generic structure, Grammatical problems, Writing English paragraphs, Online learning*

1. INTRODUCTION

English which is known as an international language is a very important language for communicating both in educational, social, economic, cultural, technological, health, political and other aspects used by people in many countries. This means that if someone wants to communicate with other people, of course, they must be able to master English both orally and in writing. Therefore, in Indonesia English is a subject that must be studied starting at the elementary school level and even up to college.

Regarding the importance of English for communication, the Indonesian government has made efforts to improve the education system and human resource development in realizing national education goals, especially at the tertiary level. Every student from various study programs must take an English course, namely General English as a compulsory university course. In the English curriculum, students are expected to learn and practice fluency in English both in listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. This is based on the learning achievement of graduates in the

KKNI English course, namely students who are proficient in spoken and written English in the context of daily/general, academic, and post-intermediate level work.

From the expected learning outcomes based on the KKNI above, proficient in written English is one of the achievements that must be met. Non-English students should be able to write simple paragraphs on topics related to everyday/general, academic, and work contexts. This is because writing is an important skill in learning English to express ideas, feelings, and messages. In addition, good writing skills are also very important for non-English students to improve their communication skills to enter a challenging global era such as in educational, work, and social environments, as well as to prepare the skills of future students in certain disciplines. It is important for lecturers to train students to write a few good paragraphs so that there will be no misunderstandings that occur from the information given in the writing.

In addition, during this pandemic all learning processes are carried out online. Lecturers and students interact through various online applications such as Zoom, Whatsapp, Google Meet, Google Classroom, and Sikuli (Learning System Management). Some lecturers send materials and give assignments through the application. Students are able to ask questions and argue when this learning process takes place in different ways. They can type opinions, discussions, and questions through the chat and the lecturer will reply to them. This means that lecturers and students can conduct online discussions like studying in class directly.

However, unfortunately, students often get into trouble if the lecturer assigns them to write especially in writing descriptive text. The students should

involve two generic structures in writing descriptive text: identification and description. Identification is to identify the phenomenon that needs to be described. In formulating ideal identification in descriptive text, the token (subject or participant) should be specific. The process (verb or predicate) should be relational-identification. Gerot & Wignell (1994) state that identification must be written with the identifying process and the participants are token and value. This is the main knowledge that must be known by the writer. If the writer does not know about these characteristics, he/she will produce incorrect identification in the descriptive text even the social function can be achieved (Tessuto, 2015; Hyland, 2004; Zavolzi, 2021).

The description is the second generic structure in descriptive text. In this part, a writer needs to describe parts, characteristics, and qualities of a particular thing. The participant or subject on the description is called carrier and token. The verb or process on the description is called relational-attributive. The last part is an object called an attribute. The whole of them (carrier and token, relational-attributive and attribute) should be written textually. It means that the writer needs to avoid general participant, avoid using the material, mental and other processes except for relational process. The writer needs to apply the epithet to represent the quality and use a simple present (Van den Heuvel et al., 2016; Lu et al., 2021).

Besides, the students should pay attention to the language use in descriptive text. The structure or language use has an important role in writing descriptive text. There are many types of words in English. These words are divided into eight categories namely The eight parts of speech: Noun, Verb, Adjective, Adverb, Pronoun, Preposition, Conjunction and Interjection (Yarber and Yarber, 2010).

They also said that a writer should understand the eight parts of speech in order to help write a paragraph correctly, clearly and interestingly. Besides, Dye (2005) also stated that there were several things that must be noticed in writing paragraphs such as parallelism, modifiers, Subject-Verb agreement, punctuation, and capitalization.

Even with writing simple paragraph, students often lose interest and don't finish it. This shows that making good writing is considered a very difficult skill. It is evident that many students still make mistakes in their paragraphs and they are often trapped by the problem of how to develop their ideas into a wider paragraph. This may be due to lack of knowledge of schematic structures and linguistic features to generate sentences. This fact is based on the experience of the researchers in teaching at the research site.

Related to the above background, the researchers was interested in conducting research on some problems that non-English students arise in writing. Therefore, the researchers have compiled this research entitled "Analysis of Generic Structure and Grammatical Problems of Students in Writing English Paragraphs in Online Learning at Muhammadiyah University of Riau"

2. METHOD

This research was conducted using a descriptive qualitative design collected data through writing tasks of the students. The research was aimed to analyze the problem of the generic structure and grammatical writing of students in writing English paragraphs in online learning at Muhammadiyah University of Riau. The population of this research were the students taking the English subject in the first semester in academic year of 2021/2022 at Muhammadiyah University of Riau.

The samples of this research were 4 classes consisting of a number of students for each class taken randomly spreading in eight faculties. They were from Computer Science faculty (40), Communication Science faculty (28), Natural Science and Health faculty (45), and Teacher Training and Education faculty (25). The total number of students are 138.

The students were asked to write some paragraphs of descriptive text about their family. The collected data were analyzed by using descriptive qualitative as follows:

$$P = \frac{Ef}{Ne} \times 100\%$$

P = Percentage
Ef = Error frequency
Ne = Number of errors

The data was analyzed based on indicators of writing tasks. It can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Generic Structure and Grammatical Problems in Writing English Paragraphs of Descriptive Text

Generic Structure Problems	Identification, Descriptions
Grammatical Problems	Noun, Pronoun, Verb, Adjective, Adverb, Preposition, Conjunction, Parallelism, Modifiers, Subject-Verb Agreement, Punctuation, Capitalization

The theory of genre with a perspective of systemic functional linguistics was applied to analyze the identification in descriptive text. The first clause was tabulated and clarified whether the identification is categorized correctly or not. The researchers examined the relational process in identification. The process (verb or predicate) should be

relational-identifying. In addition, the verb or process on the description is called relational-attributive. The last part is an object called an attribute. The whole of them (carrier and token, relational-attributive and attribute) should be written textually.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

This research was a qualitative research which used observation of writing tasks as instrument to take the data. The researchers checked over the students' writing and used observation checklist as a tool of observation. As stated before, the numbers of students who were observed in this research were four classes consisting of a number of students for each class. The total numbers of the students were 138.

From the research conducted at Muhammadiyah University of Riau through observation, it was found that the non-English students had problems in writing English paragraphs. To describe the problems, the researchers referred back to the research questions. They were about the students' problems in generic structure and grammar in writing paragraphs of descriptive text. The findings of the research are presented as follows:

1. The generic structure problems in writing paragraphs

There were two things that must be written by students in generic structure of descriptive text: Identification and Descriptions. It could be seen in the following figures:

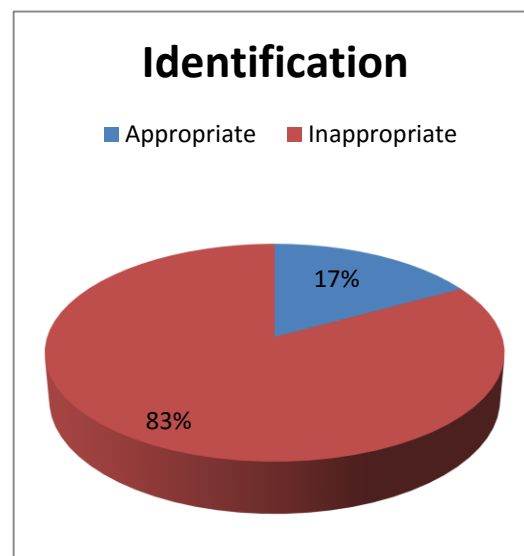


Figure 1. Writing Identification

From the figure above, it can be seen that most of the students got problem in writing identification. There were 115 students (83%) writing inappropriate identification and 23 students (17%) writing appropriate identification.

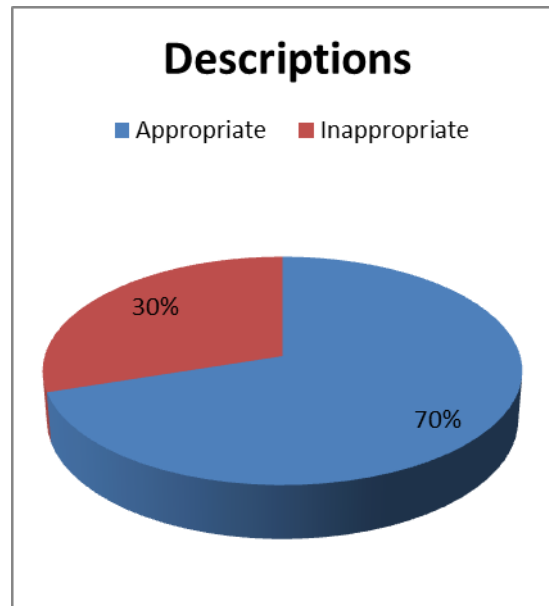


Figure 2. Writing Descriptions

From figure 2, it showed that most of the students could write descriptions appropriately. There were 97 students (70%) writing appropriate descriptions

and 41 students (30%) writing inappropriate descriptions.

It can be concluded that the generic problems encountered by students was writing identification. They could not write the appropriate identification. It may be due to lack of knowledge about writing a good identification.

The researchers applied the theory of genre with a systemic functional linguistics perspective proposed by Gerot and Wignel (1994) and Halliday et al. (2014) to know whether the identification and descriptions were categorized as appropriate or inappropriate. Some examples of data were presented as follows:

The Examples of Writing Identification and Descriptions

Identification

- *I have a big family (YW)* => Inappropriate
- *I would like to introduce my self (VR)* => Appropriate
- *I have a family consisting of 5 members* => Inappropriate
- *I am from a big family (UH)* => Inappropriate
- *Let me intoduce my family (MFR)* => Inappropriate
- *My family consists of father, mother, a older brother, two sister in law, and me (ZP)* => Appropriate

Descriptions

- *My father's name is Donirin (LS)* => Appropriate
- *He works as a rubber farmer (ADS)* => Appropriate
- *I spend time with my family only at night (NE)* => Appropriate

- *So I live in a rented house (NA)* => Inappropriate
- *Like spending time with my family like eating together (SFBN)* => Inappropriate

2. The grammatical problems in writing paragraphs

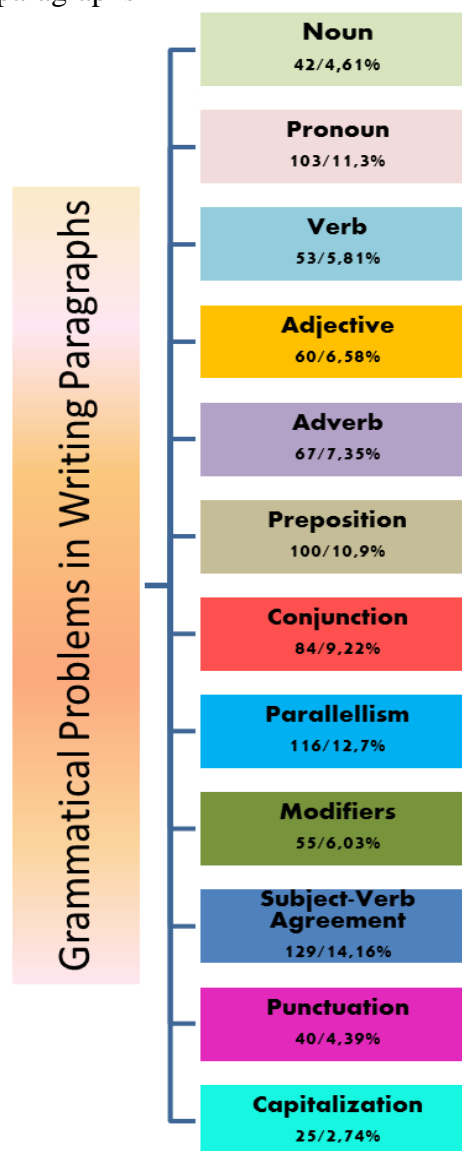


Figure 3. The Numbers and the Percentage of Grammatical Problems

The Examples of Problems in writing paragraphs

1. Noun
Student's writing:

- When on holiday, what I want to do is take a walk to the beach*
 It should be:
When on holiday, what I want to do is taking a walk to the beach
2. Pronoun
 Student's writing:
My father's name is Suyanto. She works as a teacher.
 It should be:
My father's name is Suyanto. He works as a teacher.
3. Verb
 Student's writing:
My brother still in junior high school
 It should be:
My brother still studies in junior high school
4. Adjective
 Student's writing:
My mother is the most strong and patient mother figure
 It should be:
My mother is the strongest and patient mother figure
5. Adverb
 Student's writing:
I love very my sister
 It should be:
I really love my sister
6. Preposition
 Student's writing:
She was born at July
 It should be:
She was born in July
7. Conjunction
 Student's writing:
She didn't work but she becomes housewife
 It should be:
She didn't work so she becomes housewife
8. Parallelism
 Student's writing:
We like to travel around and shopping everything
 It should be:
We like to travel around and shop everything
9. Modifiers
 Student's writing:
The person which I admire most is my mother
 It should be:
The person who I admire most is my mother
10. Subject-Verb Agreement
 Student's writing:
He work as a mechanic in Kalimantan
 It should be:
He works as a mechanic in Kalimantan
11. Punctuation
 Student's writing:
I really admire grandmother, because sh is great grndmother, tough figure and show me to do good thing to anyone
 It should be:
I really admire grandmother because sh is great grndmother, tough figure and show me to do good thing to anyone
12. Capitalization
 Student's writing:
I really admire Mother because she is a very strong, loving and very patient person
 It should be:
I really admire my mother because she is a very strong, loving and very patient person

3.2 Discussion

This research aimed to find out the problems of the generic structure and grammatical writing of students in writing English paragraphs in online learning. First, the results were found that the students had problems in writing identification in descriptive text. It indicates whole participants did not know how to write identification appropriately to begin in writing a descriptive text. Gerot & Wignel (1994) state that identification must be written with the identifying process and the participants are token and value. The students should know how to write the appropriate identification especially the usage of the identification process. In addition, the non-English students should be familiar with the group process like identifying and attributive.

Besides, the non-English students also had problems in grammar. The most frequent problems were in subject-verb agreement, parallelism, pronoun and preposition. This is due to the lack of knowledge about the usage of grammar in writing. Latif (2007) claims that the reason of committing writing problems among non-native speakers of English is the lack of knowledge of second or foreign language structure. In addition, it can be caused by lack of practising in writing English paragraphs. Mourtaga (2010) points out that the main reason of writing problems committed by second or foreign language learners is the lack of practicing English writing.

4. CONCLUSION

After analyzing the data, it was found that there were some problems occurred on non-English students at Muhammadiyah University of Riau in writing English paragraphs of descriptive text. They had problems in writing identification in descriptive text. It is necessary to be known that the identity of

the participant or token must be written explicitly. The identity of a specific phenomenon, person, place and thing is needed and important to formulate identification. Identifying process and specific participants are important things in producing the first generic structure in the description. However, in writing the second generic structure, the writer can use both processes (attributive or identifying).

Moreover, the students also encountered grammatical problems such as noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, parallelism, modifiers, subject-verb agreement, punctuation, and capitalization. Based on the numbers and the percentage of the grammatical problems above, it showed that the non-English students at Muhammadiyah University of Riau got serious problem on subject-verb agreement that has 129 / 14,16%. It is also occurred on relevant research conducted by Romadhon, et.al (2020) entitled Grammatical Error Analysis in Descriptive Writing of Accounting Students at Politeknik Harapan Bersama Tegal. They found that the students made mistakes on the Verb Agreement 7.07%, Capitalizing 34.84%, Grammatical Error (Usage) 2.52%, Sentence Pattern 4.04%, Pronoun 49.49%, and Spelling 2.02%.

Besides, there is also a research conducted by Syaifullah and Sukova (2022) focusing on finding out grammatical mistakes undergraduate students when writing their thesis abstract in English. It was found that there were four types of grammatical faults in writing abstracts: omission, addition, and misformation.

From the result of analyzing the generic structure problems and grammatical problems faced by the non-English students, it is expected that they care on writing problems and pay attention to these problems. In addition, the result of the analysis is beneficial for lecturers as

necessary information about writing problems and prepare effective teaching technique in writing.

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