

WRITING STYLE: ANALYZING HOW THE STUDENTS EXPRESS THEIR IDEAS IN DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPH

Uyun Nafiah MS¹

¹English Study Program of UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi

UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi

Jl. Jambi Ma. Bulian KM. 16, Jambi, Postcode: -, Phone: +62741-583183,
Indonesia

e-mail: uyunnafiah@uinjambi.ac.id

Abstract: *This research was done to analyze how the students' writing styles are in their descriptive paragraph in terms of sentence structure, word choice, degree of details and descriptions, and degree of formality. This was a descriptive qualitative approach with content analysis method. The sample of this study was 26 of fifth semester students of English Education Program UIN TS Jambi academic year 2018/2019. Technique of collecting the data was by documenting students' descriptive paragraph writing and doing semi structure interview. The result finding showed that the students have different style of writing. In terms of sentence structure, some students used many simple sentences in their writing that make their paragraphs are monotonous and boring to read; while a few students used a mixture of these sentence types that make their paragraphs are interesting to read and seemed attractive. In terms of word choice, the students' paragraphs mostly used sensory details and a figurative language of simile in describing the object. While in degree of details and description, in general all of students' paragraphs are specific and descriptive by using prepositional phrases and adding many adjectives to describe the characteristics of the object. In addition, related to degree of formality, in general students' descriptive paragraphs are casual.*

Keywords: *writing style, descriptive paragraph*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a communication process to share any information and knowledge for communication in written form among people around the world. As a productive skill,

writing in English as a foreign language requires suitable content and correct use of the language. The way of the students writing a paragraph influences the whole sense of paragraph produced.

The students of the English Education Program UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi take Writing III in fifth semester. The objective of this subject is to provide the students the ability of writing and analyzing any kinds of paragraph and essays. Actually, they learn basic knowledge about the organization and elements in writing good paragraph in Writing II, but in Writing III they focus on learning characteristics types of the paragraph and analyzing them for the first part of the semester and after that they study about writing essays.

In addition, there are some types of paragraph that have to be understood by the students. They are exemplification, process, cause and effect, comparison and contrast, definition, division-classification, description, narration and argumentation. Every paragraph has its characteristic that differs from the others. Like descriptive paragraph that focus on exploring a thing, a person or a place to create imaginary image in readers' mind. According to Syafi'I (2007), the most important part of descriptive paragraph is the picture that the writer creates in the mind of the readers. Therefore, the

students need to use the five senses for giving specific and concrete details to visualize the things being described.

Furthermore, different writers have different kind of how they describe an object. It is influenced by individual knowledge about the topic and their understanding about the kinds of the paragraph. Although the writers should follow the standardized organization of the paragraph that consists of topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence, they will have preferences of choosing sentence structure and diction in their writing. Therefore, the researcher wants to analyze how the students' writing styles found in their descriptive paragraph in terms of sentence structure, word choice, degree of details and descriptions, and degree of formality are.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing of Descriptive Paragraph

Many linguists define writing in different ways. Heaton (1991:135) states that writing skills have complex cognitive activities; requiring mastery not only grammatical and rhetorical

devices, but also conceptual and judgmental elements. It means that the writer should have cognitive and metacognitive ability in expressing ideas in written form. Furthermore, Langan (2000:12) says that writing is a skill. Like any other skills, writing can be learned by process. But writing is not automatic process that can be done by itself. It needs many aspects to comprehend and some practices to be fluent in writing.

A paragraph consists of three parts. According to Oshima and Hogue (2006:3), all paragraphs have a topic sentence, some supporting sentences and a concluding sentence. Topic sentence is a sentence that states the main idea of the paragraph. In topic sentence, not only stating about the topic discussed but also controlling the topic into specific area that will be explained clearly in rest of the paragraph. While supporting sentences explain the topic by giving more information about details and examples that support the topic sentence. As stated by Langan (2000) "In writing any idea that you advance must be supported with specific reasons or details. " It means that the writer should provide evidence for

any points made. Furthermore, concluding sentence restates the main idea or summarizes the main points in the paragraph.

Moreover, there are two elements that should be considered in producing a good paragraph. First, every paragraph should have unity. As Syafii (2007:8) states that it is important for a paragraph to have unity, which means that all sentences discuss only one main idea. Oshima and Hogue (2006:18) also have the same opinion that in each paragraph discusses one and the only one main idea from beginning to end. They also adds "the second part of the unity is that every supporting sentence must directly explain or prove the main idea." All the sentences in the paragraph relate each other to that idea. Therefore a unified paragraph is easier to read and understand.

The second element that a paragraph should have is coherence. The function of coherence is to make the writing movement from one sentence to the next flow logically and smoothly. According to Oshima and Hogue (2006:22), there are for ways to achieve coherence: 1) repeating key nouns; 2) using

consistent pronouns; 3) using transition signals to link ideas; and 4) arranging ideas in logical order. By doing all of the ways, there will not happen sudden jumps from one sentence to the others. Each sentence will go easily into the next one.

In addition, Folse, Muchmore and Vestri (2010: 9) describe four features of a paragraph. First, a paragraph has a topic sentence that states the main idea. It is the foundation for the readers to understand what the paragraph is about. Next, all of the sentences in a paragraph are about one topic. All sentences connect to the topic sentence and no unrelated sentence. Third, the first line of a paragraph is indented. This indentation is moving the first letter to the right about a half of an inch. The last one is that the last sentence or concluding sentence brings the paragraph to a logical conclusion. It usually states the main point again or summarizes the main idea of the paragraph.

Writing is a process, not a product, which requires some steps in doing it. Oshima and Hogue (1999:3) explain some stages in writing process, they are prewriting,

planning, writing and revising draft and writing the final copy. Some activities that can be done in pre-writing are choosing and narrowing topic to a specific focus and brainstorming to generate ideas. After choosing specific topic, the writer can brainstorm the ideas by using listing (making a list of whatever words or phrases); by free writing (writing freely about the topic); or by clustering (writing specific topic and draw balloon around it). The next stage is planning. In this stage, the writer makes the list, writes the topic sentence and makes outlines. So, in an outline, there is a topic sentence, major supporting points and minor supporting details. The third stage is writing and revising draft. After writing first rough draft, the writer revises content and organization, does proofreading the second draft, and writes the final copy to hand in.

Descriptive paragraph as one type of the paragraphs requires detail descriptions in readers' impression. Schwegler (1985:69) states "The basis for a successful description is concrete details-specific things or quality." By using sensory details, descriptive writing presents scenes or

picture of something. It is important when the subject is something accessibly to the sense only indirectly, like a person's character or intelligence. In addition, Syafi'I (2007) says "Words can create pictures and impressions that appeal not only to the mind but also to the five sense: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch." It means that in writing descriptive paragraph, the writer should help the readers to use their five organs: eye, ear, nose, mouth and skin to whomever or whatever she is describing, so that the readers could easily visualize the person or the object.

Writing Style

How a writer puts words together to express meaning is as important as what the writer says. Just as writers use different structures to organize their ideas and information, they also use different style to express their ideas and information. According to Anonym (2005) "Style is distinctive way of writing or speaking or doing something; the manner in which something is done." Style is important in writing because it is often what attracts the readers to

get involved in written form. The writers can set their purpose and ease the readers in reading it by examining some elements in writing style. As in Learning Express (2005:102), there are four elements in writing style: sentence structure, word choice, degree of detail and description, and degree of formality.

a. Sentence structure

Sentence structure refers to kinds of the sentences used in writing. Oshima and Hogue (2006: 164) state that there are four basic kinds of sentences in English; they are simple sentence, compound sentence, complex sentence and compound-complex sentence. These kinds of sentence are determined by the kinds of clauses used to construct it. A simple sentence consists of one independent clause; a compound sentence consists of two or more independent clauses together joined with a coordinator, a conjunctive adverb, or with a semicolon; a complex sentence consists of one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses; and a compound-complex sentence has at least three clauses which consists of at least two

independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses.

By knowing basic kinds of the sentences in English, the writer can develop a good writing style. Written paragraph that uses only one kind of sentence is boring and may not convey the message that the writer intends to complete. For instance using too many compound sentences with the coordinator *and* causes the paragraph feel bored. As well as using too many simple sentences cause the paragraph sounds oddly. Hence, a good paragraph should use a mixture of sentence type, so that the paragraph looks interesting and not monotonous.

b. Word choice

Words and expressions that provide exact, specific descriptions are preferable to those giving vague, general impression. “Words can create pictures and impressions that appeal not only to the mind but also to the five senses” (Syafi’i:2007). It means that in writing a descriptive paragraph, the word choice determine whether the paragraph is impressive and real or not. Furthermore, the specific word that the writers choose—their diction or word

choice—can therefore reveals a great deal of how they feel about their subjects. In writing a descriptive paragraph, it is useful to use vivid language to make description come alive for the readers (Henry & Jerome: 1978). Accurate and specific word can give the description interest.

Diction, the particular words chosen and used by the writer, influence the meaning accepted by the readers. The influence can be in form denotation (exact and dictionary meaning) or connotation (implied or suggested meaning). In addition, the use of word choice brings the meaning of word into figure of speech, which commonly exists: *simile*, *metaphor*, and *personification*. The simile states the comparison between two unlike objects, makes use of words as like or as....as; while metaphor suggests a comparison, gives an object the qualities of some other, unlike object; and personification gives human characteristics to animal, plants or inanimate objects.

c. Degree of details and description

The degree of details and description can be known by

determining how specific and how much description a writer applies in a paragraph. The writer can decide to explain the topic using words which are specific and descriptive or general and non-descriptive. Thus, a descriptive paragraph should provide many specific details and information to support the topic sentence.

d. Degree of formality

The degree of formality of a piece of writing has to do with how formal or casual the writer's language used. Some writers use a very formal style; others may write in casual way for particular audience or purposes. It also determines the writer's relationship to the reader.

METHODS

This research is designed on descriptive qualitative approach. The researcher will use content analysis in analyzing the data. Ary, Jacobs and Sorensen (2010:457) say "Content or document analysis is a research method applied to written or visual materials for the purpose of identifying specified characteristics of the material." In this case, the

documents analyzed are students' descriptive paragraph writing.

The research of this study is conducted at English Education Program. The subject of the research is the fifth semester students of English Education Program academic year 2018/2019 which consist of 123 students for five parallel classes as population. The researcher uses purposive sampling to decide the number of the students to be representative for this study, and 26 students in class C are the samples for this study since based on the result of previous score, this class got the highest mean of all.. The technique for collecting data is by documenting students' descriptive paragraphs about certain person's room and doing semi structured interview.

After that, the data is analyzed. According to Cresswell (2012) there are six steps commonly used in analyzing qualitative data. They are preparing and organizing the data for analysis; engaging in an initial exploration of the data through the process of coding it; using the codes to develop a more general picture of the data; representing the findings through narratives and

visuals; making an interpretation of the meaning of the results; finally conducting strategies to validate the accuracy of the findings.

In this research, the researcher will represent the findings through narration and make interpretation of the meaning found. Conclusion drawing involves stepping back to consider what to analyze and its simplification for the research question about analyzing writing style of students' descriptive paragraph in terms of sentence structure, word choice, details and formality.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After getting the descriptive paragraph written by the students, the researcher analyzes the writing styles used in terms of sentence structure, word choice, degree of details and description and degree of formality.

1. Sentence structure

After analyzing the types of sentences that the students use, most of them use combination of simple sentence, compound sentence and complex sentence. Only a few students write compound-complex sentence.

a. Simple sentence

It consists of one independent clause. Some of the simple sentences are as topic sentence, as follows:

Meli's flat house room is very comfortable for us. (Student 6)

My sister has a very beautiful room. (Student 8)

My bedroom is a place for me to relax, take a rest and sleep. (Student 11)

My room is the place to spend free time. (Student 19)

My study room is quiet, not too spacious, but very comfortable. (Student 20)

In my house, there are several rooms. (Student 23)

Simple sentences as topic sentence are good enough since they are not too specific and not too general. The students can develop the sentences according to the limitation idea in the topic sentence. Besides, there are many sentences written as supporting sentences as below:

The bedroom is big enough for me. There is a brown photon the wall and two windows with blue

curtains. The floor is black. The walls are white. (Students 25)

It consists of a square table, chairs, hangers, bookshelf, and nightgown. My study room is located inside my house. It is painted green. My study desk is red. Above it, there are bookshelves, pencil boxes and study lights. My desk is near the window. I usually open the window to make the room cooler. In the corner of this room, there is a stuck of my study schedule. To the left of the door is a hanger. I use this hanger to hang a hat and belt. (Student 20)

Makrrub's room is white color. In that room, there are two cupboards, there is laptop and stuck of books. A lot of books are English books. On the floor, I see two mattresses and some pillows. On the wall there are many clothes hanging. It smells. (Student 14)

In my mother's room, there is a cupboard. In the cupboard, there are many clothes. Some of the clothes are hanging. There is

mattress beside the cupboard. The mattress color is blue. In front of the mattress, there is television. The television has many beautiful accessories. One of the accessories is a flower. That flower makes comfortable atmosphere. (Student 12)

Her room is pink. She loves pink. The wall in the room is also coated with pink hello kitty wallpaper. He also put some hello kitty posters on the walls of her room. At the right corner of her room, there is a reddish pink curtain. Next to it, there is a study table. On the study desk, there is also a pair of speakers, a DVD player and radio. In front of her study desk, lies the bed. In this room, there are many dolls. A lot of hello kitty dolls are on the bed. This room is very comfortable. (Student 8)

The room is very attractive and comfortable with a pink color wall. At the corner of the room, there is a study table. On the other side of the room, there is a bed filled with dolls. Then, there

is a small cupboard for her novel collection and school book. Behind the door are clothes hangers and bag. Fresh room air comes from a large window with white curtains. (Student 4)

Above paragraphs are some parts of students' descriptive paragraphs which contain the same structure for all. They wrote in form of simple sentences for most of the paragraph. It is also supported by the result of interview which asked about what kind of sentences they used commonly. The students said simple sentence since they didn't need to think harder about the details. It has the same use "be" and makes the sentences in the paragraph short. Therefore, the paragraphs seemed boring. Although there are some details in the sentences, the paragraphs are not interesting to read.

b. Compound sentence

Compound sentences are also found in the students' descriptive paragraph. In

compound sentence, there are two or more independent clauses coined by a coordinator, a conjunctive adverb or a semi colon. They put the sentences as topic sentence and supporting sentences. They are:

*It looks brighter **and** I feel more comfortable for studying there. (Student 2)*

*It is cool at the noon and warm at night, **so** I really like it. (Student 5)*

*The room is small, **but** we do many activities I this room, such as discussing about our assignment and watching movies. (Student 6)*

*Her room is very comfortable, **so** I often visit her room to play, vent and tell stories. (Student 8)*

*My bedroom is a place for me to relax, rest and sleep, **and** it is very enjoyable place for me. (Student 10)*

*My room is medium sized and simple, **yet** I like it very much. (Students 19)*

***Although** it is small room, I am comfortable to stay there for a long time. (Student 2)*

Some of the students write the sentences by joining it with coordinator such as for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so. As we can see from the sentences above, the students use coordinator **and, so, but, and yet**. Besides, only one student writes compound sentence completely coined by conjunctive adverbs of **although**. In contrast, there is no one writes compound sentence joining by semi colon since they are not familiar with the use of semi colon to separate independent clause.

c. Complex sentence

As many students use simple sentence, most of the students also use complex sentences which consist of one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses (adverb clause, adjective clause, or noun clause). Some of them are:

I found the beautiful room when I visited to my auntie's house.
(Student 5)

At the door facing into the room, depends on a dream catcher that

will ring every time the door is opened or closed. (Student 8)

I have a friend who has loved her room too much. (Student 11)

This room is my favorite place because my bedroom is comfortable. (Student 15)

I like to spend my time in my sister's bedroom because her bedroom is very comfortable to do many things. (Student 16)

d. Compound complex sentence

There are also a few students, three students exactly, write combination of compound-complex sentence which consists of three clauses, at least two independent clauses. The underlined clauses below are independent sentences and the stripped lines below are dependent clauses, as follow:

As a human being, we are sure that sometimes we feel tired, exhausted and weary of what we did a whole day; thus, we also need time to rest and place certainly. (Student 2)

The floor in my sister' room is wooden, and it creak when I step on.(Student 9)

I thinkthat my sister's bedroom has complete facilities, so it makes me difficult to move on from the room. (Student 16)

In addition, there are some paragraphs that combine the types of sentences, as below:

I found the beautiful room when I visited to my auntie's house. It is one of five rooms in her house. She said that it is a room which she designed for her future daughter. It is a simple room, but also amazing. When I opened the door, I saw the wall with unique wallpaper. It is Doraemon. Because she likes doraemon, she designed the room full of doraemon. (Student 5)

Meli's flat house room is very comfortable for us. Her flat house is beside our campus. If we don't have any class, we usually take a rest there. A special side of her room is her bed. On her bed, there are some dolls and pillows which are very tiny. (Student 6)

I like to spend my time in my sister's bedroom because her bedroom is very comfortable place to do many things. When entering her room, I find a beautiful painting in the wall with blue color. There are a couple windows under the painting and when I open it, I will get fresh air. Beside the window, there is a big cupboard which she fills with a lot of clothes and her favorite shoes. There is TV cable in the corner of the room. (Student 16)

The above paragraphs are some of students' descriptive paragraphs that use mixture of type of sentences. They expressed their ideas in form of simple sentences, compound sentences and complex sentences. The use of different sentence type attracts the readers to read and not boring in reading it. Based on the answer of interview, many students felt difficulty in expressing their idea in long and varied sentences. However, some of them could make combination of the sentences in their paragraphs.

2. Word choice

The use of word choice with vivid details helps the reader to create a mental picture of what is being described through sensory details. It also involves the readers so that the writer can visualize what or who is being described. Furthermore, Langan (2000:190) adds the ways so that the object can be visualized are by organizing a combination of physical order (moving from left to right or from far to near, or follow some other consistent order); size (beginning with large features to the smaller one); and specific order. Therefore, it is important to use specific and concrete details in describing object clearly.

The words chosen by the students indicate the use of five senses, like the word “see” in the sentence “When you open the door, you will *see* the wall with attractive picture”; the word “feel” in the sentence “I feel comfortable staying in this room”; the word “smell” in the sentence “There are many clothes hanging which smells bad.” The use of sensory details brings the readers involved in the context of the description. The students also use

figurative speech simile that compare similarity of one thing to the other thing. As her sentence “The sister’s room is *like* a castle and has beautiful look.” The use of word *like* indicates that there is similarity between her sister room and castle.

Based on interview, all of the students knew that in writing descriptive paragraph they need to describe the characteristics that can make picture in readers’ minds.

3. Degree of details and description

All of the students give details on their descriptions. They add many prepositional phrases on their writing, such as on, beside, in the left side, between, and so on. For example:

“In the right corner, there is a blue table. On the table, there are some magazines and stand lamp. Behind the table, there is a blue chair with no back. Not far from the table and chair, there is a bed with full of doraemon motif. On the bed, there are two pillows, two bolsters, and a blanket.” These prepositional phrases give specific details about the place. The readers can imagine the location by reading these sentences. In

addition, the use of many adjectives adds the description more details, such as *a blue table* and *a blue chair*. In general it can be said that all students' descriptive paragraphs are specific and descriptive as they use many object of preposition and some adjectives.

4. Degree of formality

The style used is casual which is proven by the use of first and second person point of view to indicate intimate between the writer and the readers. Most of the students use "I" and "you" as the writer's perspective. Because the students are asked to write down descriptive paragraph, they tend to describe the objects that are familiar with them and to use words that they use for daily life. The use of familiar words create emotional built in readers' mind and make the paragraphs don't seem formal.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The finding and discussion show that generally the students are good in writing descriptive paragraph. Only a few students wrote the

paragraph incorrectly. The students also have different style of writing. In terms of sentence structure, the students applied the four kinds of sentences which are simple sentence compound sentence, complex sentence and compound complex sentence. Some students used many simple sentences in their writing that make their paragraphs are monotonous and boring to read; while a few students used a mixture of these sentence types that make their paragraphs are interested to read and seemed attractive. In terms of word choice, the students' paragraphs mostly used sensory details in describing the object, and a figurative language of simile to compare part of the object. While in degree of details and description, in general all students used specific details by using prepositional phrases and other additional phrases; and added many adjectives to describe the characteristics of the object. It could be said that students' paragraphs are specific and descriptive. In addition, related to degree of formality, in general students' descriptive paragraphs are casual by the use of first and second person point of view;

and the use of familiar words that create intimacy between the writers and the readers.

Based on the findings, the researcher found some missing part of the paragraph organization and ungrammatical sentences. These become suggestion for the students to improve their understanding about grammar and organization by doing more practice in writing.

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