

## **A Descriptive Linguistics Analysis on Student's Essay Writing**

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### **Abstract**

The objective of this research is to identify student's abilities and difficulties in writing descriptive essay. This research used qualitative method by descriptive linguistic analysis. The source of the data was taken from one of student's essay. The finding showed that the student was able to arrange the content using chronological order. He was also capable in applying organization of the content (form). Nevertheless, he still had difficulties in using English grammar. Besides, the student lacked of vocabulary and made little mistake in using capitalization.

Keywords: *content, form essay, grammar, vocabulary.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

English has shown itself as a global language. In the field of agriculture, mainly fishery major, the students have to master English skill, one of which is writing. The students need to possess writing capability especially the English written assignment given by their lecturer. A good English academic writing generally consists of three main elements, namely introductory, body and concluding paragraph (Oshima and Hogue, 1991:101).

In this research, the researcher chose descriptive writing since it is a part of academic writing. Oshima and Hogue (1988:50) said that descriptive writing appeals to the senses, so it tells how something looks, feels, smells, tastes, and /or sounds. Furthermore, they said that a good description is like a 'word picture'. The reader can imagine the object, place, or person in his or her mind. A writer of a good description is like an artist who paints a picture that can be 'seen' clearly in the mind of the reader.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Reid (2000:5) defined writing as a process of expressing ideas and opinions in the form of words and sentences either in writer or printed form. When the writer has an idea that needs to elaborate in several paragraphs, essay is the exact writing form to use. An essay is a piece of writing that has

more than one paragraph (Oshima and Hogue, 1988:6). It is divided into three parts: a beginning, middle and an end. Similarly, Dillon (2007:158) said that essay is a series of paragraph that relates to one idea, in which the idea is expressed in a thesis statement.

Concerning with descriptive writing, Creswell (2012:247) defined it as a detailed rendering of people, places, or events in a setting. So, it is easiest to start the analysis after the initial reading and coding of the data. Meanwhile, Dillon (2007:157) stated that descriptive writing uses vivid details to describe a scene or people, animals, or things. The purpose of descriptive writing is to enable the reader to envision and share the experience the writer is describing. To accomplish it, the writer may rely on certain structural and linguistic devices. Writing descriptive essay is frequent assignment in English, sciences and courses where the writer's power of observation and the ability to clearly, accurately, and vividly communicate his/her observations are critical skills (Dillon, 2007:159).

Furthermore, Dillon (2007:160) proposed the steps of writing descriptive essay as follows: Step 1. Choose a topic. Pick a topic, you are interested in exploring; Step 2. Gather and organize your ideas; Step 3. Narrow your focus; Step 4. Draft your theses statement and introduction; Step 5. Decide on the order you will use; Step 6. Draft your topic sentence; Step 7. Draft your body paragraph; Step 8. Select and corporate transitions; Step 9. Read and revise; Step 10. Write your concluding paragraph; Step 11. Proofread your essay.

In the meantime, Harris (2006: 68-69) exposes five general components that are crucial in analyzing student's writing, namely: 1.Content: the substance of the writing ; 2. Form: the organization of the content ; 3. Grammar: the employment of grammatical forms and syntactic patterns ; 4. Style: the choice of words and lexical items ; 5. Mechanics: the use of the graphic convention or use of punctuation and capitalization. The researcher also used several relevant theories of some experts in supporting the above features.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The purposes of this research are to identify and describe students' abilities and difficulties in writing a descriptive essay. This research will use

descriptive qualitative method. Donald at al. (2010:453) defined qualitative research as providing descriptive accounts targeted to understanding a phenomenon, a process, or a particular point of view from the perspective of those involved.

Descriptive linguistics research, according to Gleason (1961:11) is a study to build a comprehensive theory of the expression side of language, and to make detailed and comprehensive statements about the expression system of specific language. The participants of this research were thirty three Fishery students of Agriculture Faculty at University of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa. They were on second semester that took English lecture and wrote essay on their examination. The source of the data was taken from one of student's essay. The reason of choosing it is since the essay has sufficient data to analyze, it is in line with Latief (2010:144) who said that in qualitative research, the subject or source of data must own authority to represent his/ its group or majority.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

In this paper, the researcher would like to analyze the student's writing in terms of linguistics features. The features that would be elaborated based on Harris (1969:68-69) were: content, form, grammar, style and mechanics. Besides, the researcher used some relevant theories by other experts in order to support her analysis. The researcher would analyze them integratively, since the essay has related elements. The essay chosen by researcher was written by Sabibni, a second semester Fishery student of Agriculture Faculty. The following is his descriptive essay.

### **Students Descriptive Essay**

<b>Fishery Study Program</b>
Fishery Study Program is an educational institution in the field of fisheries under the auspices of the Faculty of Agriculture University of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa. Establishment of fishery study program is implemented as an effort to improve the development of fishery sector of Banten Province, especially in the development in human resources (HR) and technology used. The Fishery Study Program was established based on SK Dirjen Dikti No. 547 / D / T / 2008 on March 5, 2008.
The planning of Fishery Study Program started in 2003 as an effort to fulfill

the demand of human resources in fishery sector both government and private institution. At the start of the plan, the number of study programs to be established amounts to three including Marine Technology (TKL), Fishery Product Technology (THP), and Aquaculture (BDP). In the end, after the permit from the Directorate General of Higher Education dated March 5, 2008, it was decided to set up a fishery study program covering the fields of cultivation, fishing, processing, and marketing. The establishment of the study program is based on reviewing the potential of marine and fisheries in Banten Province which is prospective to be developed.

Attendance of fisheries study program is an effort of participation of Faculty of Agriculture UNTIRTA in supporting the national and regional development, especially the development of human resources (HR) in the fishery sector. The effort is realized in the form of cooperation with government agencies, private, and other universities such as Bogor Agricultural University, Padjadjaran University, Fishery High Institute, the condition is expected to provide opportunities for fishery study program graduates to take part in government agencies, private sector, and become entrepreneurs (cultivating, fishing, and processing).

Concerning with the content, the essay consisted of three paragraphs. The first paragraph contained the introduction in form of thesis statement which was put in the first sentence. Thesis statement is sentence that stated the main topic in the introductory (Oshima and Hogue, 1991: 125). It can be placed at the beginning, the middle or the end of first paragraph. The thesis statement above is *Fishery Study Program is an educational institution in the field of fishery under the auspices of the Faculty of Agriculture University of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa (Untirta)*.

Meanwhile, Trimble (1992:82) stated that in describing explication, it should give the reader new information about the key terms in the original definition. The key term in the sentence is *an education institution*. The description may be ranging from the very specific to the general topic. In the student's writing, it ranged from specific scope that is *Fishery as study program*, whereas *Agriculture Faculty and University of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa* are the general ones.

The second and the third paragraph are the chronological order of the first paragraph that describe history and mission of Fishery Study Program.

The next feature the researcher would like to elaborate was form. The form is organization of the content in descriptive essay. It usually used spatial order that is the arrangement of items in order by space (Oshima and Hogue, 1988:50). The spatial order is often marked by proposition like in, under, at, etc.

In the student's essay, the spatial orders mentioned above were used. Anyhow, the use of those prepositions did not indicate the location or space, but showed the hierarchy and the time. The use preposition *in* and *under* to show hierarchy can be found in the first paragraph as "... *in the field of fishery under the auspices of the...*".

As for grammar, Boey (1975:65) defined it as a set of rules that would generate all the possible of a language and none of the impossible ones related to the student's writing, the researcher four grammatical mistake as in *Establishment of Fishery Study Program is implemented as an effort to improve the development of fishery sector of Banten Province, especially in the development of human resource (HR) and technology used*. The first mistake is the missing of article 'the' before subject *Establishment*. It is based on Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982:149) who said that article 'the' is used for specific thing or noun which is considered familiar to the writer. Another mistake is found in using the verb *implemented*. Since the sentence had meaningful pattern without applying passive form, adding that verb is unnecessary.

The researcher also noticed redundant use of the word *development of*, which should be omitted. Thus the word *improve* should be changed by verb *develop*. The passive form of verb used at the last part of sentence is considered ineffective, because it is preceded by parallel noun construction. The sentence should be written as *The establishment of Fishery Study Program is as an effort to develop fishery sector of Banten Province, especially human resources (HR) and technology*.

The last sentence of the first paragraph should be inserted by English term for *SK Dirjen Dikti*, in order that the native readers know its equivalence. So, the suggested sentence is *the Fishery Study Program was established based on Decision Letter by Directorate General of Higher Education (SK Dirjen Dikti) No. 547/D/T/2008, on March 5,2008*.

The researcher found unnecessary noun that is *as an effort* in the first sentence of second paragraph. She also noticed the omission of word *technology* a compound noun of *human resources*. It would be better if those nouns are substituted as 'subsectors'. So, the sentence should be revised as *The planning of Fishery Study Program started in 2003 to fulfill the demand of its subsectors conveyed above both government and private institution.*

There was irrelevant sentence in the second paragraph, since it explained other study program that is "*At the start of the plan...* ", it must be omitted. The next sentence contained many repetition concerning with the license, the year, and adverb of time, namely "*In the end ; after the permit from ...* ". It showed also the language interference where certain habits of student's mother tongue interfere his target language learning or what is called interlanguage (Boey,1975:109). Therefore, the sentence above should be written as *Five years later, Dikti decided to set it up covering the field of cultivating, fishing, processing and marketing.*

The last sentence of the second paragraph still indicated unnecessary repetition as in *The establishment of...* it is better if the subject is in the form of 'it'. So, the suggested sentence is *It considered the fishery and marine potential in Banten Province which is prospective.*

The first sentence of the third paragraph showed the wrong choice of word as in "*Attendance...*", due to its referring to the concrete noun. Still, the sentence is mostly influenced by students' mother tongue as in "*... an effort of participation...*". Another mistake is in writing "*...Faculty of Agriculture...*", which is already conveyed in preceding paragraph. The sentence would be better written as *Fishery Study Program contributes to the national development.*

Mother tongue interference is also found in next sentence, "*The effort is realized..*". . Mischoosing the word can be seen in"*... Bogor Agriculture University,...*" since there is different hierarchy between University and Institute. The better form of sentence is *It is implemented by cooperating with government agencies, private sector, and other educational institution such as Bogor Agriculture Institute, Padjajaran University and Fishery High Institute.*

Last but not least, the student is able to conclude essay by exposing

the expectation even though it is still influenced by inter-lingual factor as in "The condition is expected to ....". The sentence would be better in signaling conclusion when it is revised as *Hopefully, it provides graduates opportunities to take part and leads them to be entrepreneurs in variety of fishery sectors.*

The next linguistics feature that should be analyzed in writing is style. Style is the writer's manner of expression, which covers the choice of words (diction), the sentence structure and word order (Stott and Avery, 2001:5). In the student's writing, there were several wrong choices of words such as *permit, attendance and realized*. It is due to the inter-lingual factor where the learner's native languages give influence in producing target language (Richards, 1974:33). Concerning with sentence structure, the students often used connective 'and' for compound sentence.

The last feature in analyzing essay is mechanics. Mechanics concerned with the use of punctuation and capitalization (Oshima and Hogue, 1988:53). The researcher noticed the mistake in writing the lecture, it can be seen in the first sentence of second paragraph namely "....*fishery study program*....", those terms refer to specific institution must be capitalized. The sentence should be written "*The planning of Fishery Study Program*..."

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

Having elaborated the student descriptive essay, the researcher would like to conclude several things. The students is able to expose the content of descriptive essay using chronological order. Besides, he is capable in applying to organization of the content form using, spatial order. Most of student's difficulties are in using grammar. He also has difficulty in choosing diction, which is due to the lack of vocabulary. The student is relatively able use punctuation and capitalization.

The findings show that student still has difficulties in writing descriptive essay grammatically. It is so since there are many English structural rules that must be mastered by learner. Therefore, the students should study much harder and the teacher should guide them more intensively. In addition, enriching vocabulary is a must in order to write essay well. Last but not least, it is expected that the next research will offer solution in reducing grammatical mistakes when writing essay.

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