The Investigation of Linguistic Contrains in Writing Faced by Junior High School Students

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Abstract

This thesis was conducted to investigate the language constraints in writing that experienced by the second grade of junior high school students at Ishafuddin, Banda Aceh. It is also to see the teachers' efforts in helping the students in solving the problems. The research design of this study is descriptive qualitative. The sample of this study are two teachers at second grade of junior high school Inshafuddin. This study used documentation and interview as instruments. The result of document collection showed that the biggest problems faced by the students was mechanics, followed by vocabulary and the content as the third problem. The last problem was organization. From the interview, it was found that the two teachers help the students with all the aspects of writing as well as additional effort like giving them assignment, bringing the dictionary, asking them to study outside the classroom, and correcting paper with students.

Keywords: Writing, Constraints, Efforts

1. INTRODUCTION

English is the most important language in the world. Learning English as a foreign language becomes one of the important subjects that is included in the school curriculum. English as a foreign language (EFL) is used for non-native English speakers. It is used by many speakers with different native languages. According to Cannizzaro (2016), English speaker, from total 1.5 billion speakers, only 375 million are classified as native. Based on the explanation of numbers above, it shows that worldwide amounted to one billion people who use English as a second language. Therefore, English was declared to be a foreign language that mostly used in the world.

In learning English, there are four skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. All of those skills are necessary skills. But, in this project, the researcher just focuses on writing skill. In Indonesia, English is the compulsory subject that is taught in junior high school. So, the students have to master it.
Wahyuningsih (2011, p. 36), states that writing is a skill which must be taught to EFL students. Junior high school is the earliest stage for students in learning English. Writing skill should be mastered by every language learner. It has significances in improving a communicative competence of learning the language. It is also one of the competencies that must be developed based on the 2013 Curriculum. Nunan (2003, p. 88), says "Writing is the process of thinking to create ideas, imagining about how to express into good writing, and thinking about how to set up a good structure it in writing and paragraph clearly." In other words, writing is one of the important skills in communication that helps students to set up a good structure.

Based on the description above, this research focuses on the following research questions:

1. what constraints of writing are faced by students of SMP Inshafuddin Islamic Boarding School Banda Aceh?
2. what are the teacher's efforts to solve the students' constraints in writing?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definition of Writing

Experts have different opinions about the definition of writing. Brown (2001, p. 336) states that writing is a thinking process. So writing represents what we think. When we start writing, the author will start thinking about the content, title until the end of the cover of the writing. Then, he also said that writing can be planned and given with the unlimited number of revisions or improvements before the writer releases their writing.

Writing is an initial activity for students in developing the main idea in writing. According to Harmer (2004, p. 33), "writing is preparation for other activity. For example, when students write a preamble sentences to discussion activities." From the explanation above it can be concluded that learning can help the students to involve thinking, arranging and teaching students in making the use of standard written forms. Another definition of writing in proposal by Urquhart and McIver (2005, p. 5-6), who define that writing is a process of recursive. It means the students revise all process and the process frequently moving back and forth in every stage.

2.2 The Steps in Teaching Writing

According to Hedge (2005, p. 310-314), there are four steps in teaching writing namely (1) Pre-Writing (2) Organizing (3) Writing/Composing (4) Revising, Editing, and Proofreading.

2.3 The Aspects of Writing

Brown (2001) as cited in Asih (2014, p. 47) mentioned five aspects of writing, they are mechanics, grammar, vocabulary, organization, and content. But, in this study, the researcher just explained four skills (Mechanic, vocabulary, organization, and content).

2.4 Writing English in Indonesia Context

Writing in the context of the English language should be considered by every beginner and who are already proficient. In Indonesia, English writing lesson starts from junior high school level.
Al and Tuzlukova (2014, p. 38) say that writing skill should be taken seriously, handled better, and the improvement of writing skills is one of the priorities and issues that are articulated. Thus, teacher should be thorough in teaching English writing for students. In addition, one of the causes of writing English language becomes difficult for students is that the difference of grammar from English to the mother tongue (Indonesia language). It starts from the pattern and also the rules in writing English is more complex than Indonesian language as well as its words.

2.5 The Learners' Constraints in Writing Skill

Writing is one of the constraints faced by students. This is due to the lack of grammatical understanding, ideas, and understanding how to apply the correct structure. Besides that, the lack of vocabulary also causes students to have problems in writing. According to Asih (2014, p. 46) "The Indonesian students' writings are still not satisfying." Particularly in a class comprising much proficiency level that the students often find the constraint in essay writing. The constraint in starting an essay writing is often one of the first constraint students face in writing. According to Morgan (2016), it happens because they have launched into the task without pre-writing. The teacher can save time by first identifying the purpose of essay to know the constraint, then brainstorming points we might make to achieve that goal.

2.6 The Teacher's Efforts in Improving Students' Writing Skill

Writing is very important skill that must be considered by the teacher. Teachers have an important role in improving student writing skill. According to Harmer (2004, p. 109), there are few things that the teachers should pay attention to increase the interest students' writing. “First, the teacher should understand the students’ reason to write. Second, the teachers should provide many opportunities for students to write. Third, the teacher should give helpful and meaningful feedback”.

There are several things that must be done by the teachers to solve the student writing problems such as organization, content, vocabulary, and mechanics. According to Mojica (2010, p. 13), to solve students problem in organization and mechanics are by giving written feedback. For content problem, there are three efforts that teacher can do, they are mind mapping, guided brainstorming, and also written feedback. The last is vocabulary problem.

Giving feedback to students on their writing can help them increase learning ability. According to Hattie and Timperley (2007, p. 81), “Feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement.” To enhance students learning in writing that lead students to development, teachers can do with feedback. After the learning is complete, then the teacher can give writing feedback for students to improve their learning (Torrance and Pryor 2002).

In learning English, students need to master vocabulary. According to Vossoughi and Zargar (2009, p. 80), vocabulary requires greater mastery of meaning. This is to make it easier for students to write. So students should start with mastery of new vocabulary. Besides that, it will be easy for students to memorize each vocabulary. This is done by the teacher by asking students to read more. This is not only in the classroom, but also outside the classroom so they can easily get new words and remember them. The learning of this vocabulary can help the students in improving their memories because the ones used in teaching can
help to memorize quickly (Metcalfe, Kornell, & Finn, 2009, p. 1079-1081). A teacher who acts as facilitator should improve student vocabulary.

3. **RESEARCH DESIGN/METHODOLOGY**

3.1 **Research Method**

The method of this research is qualitative. This qualitative research is to describe the constraint faced by the junior high school students in writing class and the teacher's effort to solve the writing constraint faced by the students.

The constraints that the researcher wants to describe are:

1. the difficulties faced by the junior high school students in writing class
2. the teacher's effort to solve the constraints of students in writing.

Based on the description above the researcher applied the descriptive qualitative research. Qualitative research is the kind of research which results in discoveries that cannot be achieved by using statistical procedures or other quantification. Putra (2012, p. 41), states that qualitative research is an appropriate research method used in a study since it has characteristics that support to find out the problems inductively. The researcher has come to the foreground of research which observes within a reasonable time and explores the issues by interacting with participants. Participants mean the subjects whose are reality are investigated by the researcher. Through the qualitative method, the researcher was able to know what the subject experience related to the phenomena being observed.

3.2 **Research Location**

This study was conducted at SMP Inshafuddin Islamic Boarding School Banda Aceh. This is located on Jl. Tanggul Lambaro Skep, Kec. Kuta Alam, Banda Aceh. The researcher did the internship program in 2016 in this school. He found that the students had problem with their writing.

3.3 **Source and Kinds of Data**

The source of data in this research is two English teachers and document analysis from students'. The researcher collected ten students writing randomly from each class of grade VIII in SMP Inshafuddin Islamic Boarding School Banda Aceh. There are three classes in the eighth grade; VIII-A, VIII-B and VIII-C. So the writer obtained 30 students writing to be analyzed. There are two kinds of data required in this study. First, the data related to kinds of constraints faced by the students in writing skill. Second, the data related to teacher's efforts to solve their students’ constraint in writing.

3.4 **Research Subject and Object**

There were two subjects in this research. The first subject was 30 students from the classes of VIII-A, VIII-B, and VIII-C in SMP Inshafuddin Islamic Boarding School Banda Aceh. The second subject was two English teachers who teach in eight grade at SMP Inshafuddin Islamic Boarding School Banda. Whereas, the object of this study was:

1. the teacher’s effort to solve the students’ constraints in writing.
2. the problems in writing faced by the students.
3.5 Research Instruments

There are two instruments used for data collection in this study: document analysis and interview. In this study, the researcher becomes the main instrument in qualitative research. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992), human being can perform as the main instrument in qualitative research. In this study, the researcher was the primary data collector.

Instruments of data collection are tools used by researchers for the activities of collecting data to be more systematic. According to Arikunto (2005, p. 100), the research instrument is defined as a tool to collect the data. It means a suggestion embodied in objects like an interview, questionnaire, checklist, observation, inventory, scale, and so forth. Based on the descriptions above, the researcher has collected the data in this study by using the document analysis and the interview.

3.6 Technique of Data Collection

One of the research activities is the collection of data. The activities of data collection were done with certain techniques and used the certain tool often called research instrument. In collecting the data there were two main activities that the researcher does.

The first activity is interview. There were two teachers who had been interviewed. The first teacher was interviewed on 4th of May 2017 at SMP Inshafuddin. It took nine minutes. The second teacher was interviewed on 9th of May 2017 at SMP Inshafuddin. It took seven minutes. The interviews with the teachers were about the effort by the teacher in dealing with the students’ linguistic constraints in writing.

The second activity was collected students’ writings on 6th of May 2017. The researcher collected the students’ writings from the teachers. From the document, the researcher read and analyzed their papers and learnt what difficulties faced by the students.

To collect the data from the school related to writing constraints faced by students and the teachers’ efforts to overcome the difficulties, the researcher did the following activities.

1. to get the data about teachers’ effort, the researcher conducted an interview with the teachers (interviewee).
2. to get the data about students linguistic constraints, the researcher collected the students’ writings paper from the teacher. From their writings, the researcher analyzed the students constraints.

3.6.1 Interview

The interview is a method of data collection which is often used by researchers. According to Bungin (2005, p. 234), interview is a process where the interviewer obtains the information for the purpose of research with the question and answer face to face between the interviewer and the respondents. Mulyana (2008, p. 180) defines interview as a form of communication or conversation between two people involving someone by asking questions based on specific goals. The purpose of this interview is to obtain the relevant information.

Bungin (2001, p. 156) says that there are several kinds of interview; (1) interview by team or panel (2) closed or open interview (3) oral history interview (4) structured and unstructured interview. Among those types, the researcher
conducted the interview by using the unstructured interview. The unstructured interview is interviews with the question that has been set out in detail that aim to get the answer. Interview guidelines consist of ten questions'. The questions asked about writing constraints faced by students and teachers’ effort to overcome the students’ difficulties in writing.

### 3.6.2 Document Analysis

The document is something that is written or printed, and any objects that have a variety of information chosen to be arranged, collected, provided or to be distributed. According to Bungin (2007, p. 124), document is a method for collecting data used in social research methods and used to search for historical data. Therefore the documentation material has a very important role in this research.

### 3.7 Technique of Data Analysis

According Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 10-11), they define analysis as consisting of three current flows of activity. First, data reduction is the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions. Second, data display is an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action. It helps the researcher. Then, the last one is conclusion drawing and verification. This is the step of gathering all the data. The researcher have to decide what things mean is nothing regularities, patterns, explanation, possible configuration, causal flows and propositions.

### 4. RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

As mentioned in the previous chapter, this study describes the constraints faced by the students in writing and the teachers’ effort in helping the students dealing with the constraints. This chapter presents the result of the study based on the data obtained from the students' writing papers and interview with the teachers. The data elaborated clearly from the interview and the students' writing documents. The research was conducted within three days on 4, 9, and 6 May 2017 at SMP Inshafuddin School in Banda Aceh.

#### 4.1 Result

##### 4.1.1 The Result of the Students’ Writing

The students’ writing papers in the form of narrative text were collected on 6th of May 2017 and analyzed to categorize the problems of writing faced by students. Detailed explanation is provided below.

The writer took thirty students' writings as the sample. It was collected from class II-A (ten papers), class II-B (ten papers), and class II-C (ten papers). Those students' writings were analyzed in term of their organization, mechanics, vocabulary, and content. It was found that the students had errors in mechanics as many as 62.82%, content 10.77%, organization 11.11%, and vocabulary 15.82%. From the results, it can be seen that most of the students made a lot of mistakes in the mechanics. It was related to punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.
The figure 4.1 shows that the students in VIII grade SMP Inshafuddin had problems in writing aspects. The biggest problem faced by students was mechanics aspect (62.28%) which counted 185 out of 297 total problems (see appendix 1). The mechanics aspect was divided into 3 (three) categories namely spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. The percentage outcome of these three aspects comes from the analysis table of student problems in writing. The explanation of those three aspects was summarized in the figure below:

The diagram above shows that the biggest problem in mechanics was punctuation (28.28%). Punctuation error was 84 out of 187 total errors. Then, the second most problem was spelling (18.18%) with 54 errors. The last one was capitalization (15.82%) with 47 errors.
The second major problem faced by the students was vocabulary (15.82%). The total errors made by the students in the vocabulary counted to 47 out of 297 total number of students’ problems in writing.

The third was the organization was the least aspect of writing problem faced by the students in writing, such as the error use of transition signals and cohesive devices in students’ writing. The student problems in organization aspect was 11.11% with total error 33 out of 297 total problems.

The last problem was the content aspect such as main idea and supporting details. Main idea and supporting details were the difficulties include within the content. Students’ problems in the content can be seen in the pie chart below.

![Students' Problems in Content](image)

**Figure 4.3 The Percentage of Students’ Problems in Content Aspect**

The percentage above indicates that the students had problems in the supporting details (6.73%) with the total number of 20 out of 32 errors in the content. Then, main idea (4.04%) detected as many as 12 errors from 32 problems that exist in the content. That data showed that main idea errors was lower than the supporting details.

### 4.1.2 The Result of Interview with T1 and T2

The data were obtained by interviewing the teachers who taught in the 8th grade of SMP Inshafuddin relating to the teachers’ efforts to solve the problem faced by the students in writing. The interview consisted of several questions. The first teacher was interviewed on 4th of May 2017 and the second teacher was interviewed on 9th of May 2017, on campus. The results from interviews with both of them could be seen below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Aspects of Writing</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td>• Help the students to spell words correctly.</td>
<td>• Ask the students to bring the dictionary to help them to spell word correctly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Teach the students to write</td>
<td>• Teach the students to write</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Discussion

In collecting the data, the researcher hardly had a problem with both T1 and T2. The teachers were very helpful in facilitating the researcher in collecting the data through interview and document analysis. However, there was a little problem in interviewing T1. She had little problem in outlining his explanation. Thus, the responses were brief and a little bit unclear.

The researcher also found that the students’ writing were different one another, because some of them made different stories under the genre of narrative. The writer assumed that the students wrote the story individually without copying their friends’ work. But, there were some of them who made very short stories that may be caused by lack of ideas or other writing problems. When analyzing the students writing papers, the researcher was assisted by his friends because he had a good ability in writing.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This chapter presents the conclusion and suggestion. The conclusions based on data analysis on the previous chapter to investigate of linguistics constraints in writing faced by junior high school students of second grade at SMP Inshafuddin School Banda Aceh. The suggestion also provides how to create and make a research in the future.

5.1 Conclusion

After completing this research, the writer made some conclusions and suggestion in term of writing constraints faced by students in writing. The purpose of this research were to find out the writing constraints faced by the students and teachers efforts made by English teachers at eight grade, SMP Inshafuddin Islamic Boarding School Banda Aceh. From the results of research conducted by the writer that the students had the problems in writing skill, particularly in content, organization, vocabulary and mechanics.

5.2 Suggestion

Derived from the result, the teacher would like to purpose several suggestions for the teachers and other researchers as the consideration to solve the problems faced by students in writing.
English teachers should be aware that there are four aspects of writing are crucial to be taught and guided namely mechanic, vocabulary, organization, and content. Since those four aspects are frequently become writing constrains experienced by English language learners.

Also, this research is limited to the level of junior high school and it only covers the genre of narrative. Wider population and other writing genres are worth investigated to see the students’ ability in writing in the territory of Aceh.

6. REFERENCES


