AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING RECOUNT TEXT AT TENTH GRADE OF SMA N 1 SUNGAI LIMAU

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Abstrak. *Penelitian ini berawal dari masalah rendahnya ketermapilan siswa dalam menulis terutama dalam penggunaan grammar pada siswa SMA N 1 Sungai Limau. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk melihat kemampuan siswa dalam mengembangkan recount texts, serta menemukan kesulitan yang dihadapi oleh siswa. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian quantitative. Populasi pada penelitian ini adalah siswa kelas X SMA N 1 Sungai Limau. selain itu, teknik cluster sampling digunakan untuk memilih sampel yakni kelas X.1 dan X.3. Instrumen yang digunakan berupa tes menulis. Data dari tes menulis siswa di analisa berdasarkan indikator dan kemudian diinterpertasikan dan menjadi temuan penelitian. Dari hasil penelitian ini, ditemukan bahwa siswa memiliki kemampuan yang lemah dalam menulis recount texts dengan nilai rata-rata 2.3. Berdasarkan test yang telah diberikan, ditemukan pula kesulitan yang dihadapi oleh siswa ketika menulis recount texts, yakni dalam penggunaan language features. Kesulitan ini berhubungan dengan penggunaan simple past tense, action verb, linking verb, dan pronoun. Penyebab dari kesulitan ini adalah interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, dan kurangnya kosa kata yang dimiliki oleh siswa. Maka dapat disimpulkan bahwa siswa masih mengalami banyak kesulitan dalam menulis sebuah kalimat yang baik dan benar di dalam recount texts sesuai dengan aturan yang berlaku. Lebih lanjut, berdasarkan hasil penelitian ini diharapkan guru dapat memberikan teknik pengajaran yang lebih baik dan siswa dapat melakukan lebih banyak latihan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan siswa dalam menulis.*

Key Words: Writing, Recount Text

A. Introduction

Writing is a process of transferring ideas into written form that is understandable. According to Sapkota (2012:70) "writing is an activity of putting down the graphic symbols which has a function to present a language in order to convey some meaning so that the reader can grasp the information which the writer has tried to convey". In addition, Brown (2001:336) states "writing is a process of thinking". this idea is supported by Nunan (2003:88) which also explains that "writing is the process of thinking to invent ideas, thinking about how to express ideas into good writing, and arranging the ideas into statement and paragraph clearly". It is because writing is a process of putting ideas in their mind on a paper to transform them in words and become sentences by using structure and coherent organization. It indicates that writers are expected to explore their ideas and arrange them into good

sentences and paragraph that have meaning. Because of that writing is not only the activity of producing symbols of language in written form, but also a mean to deliver ideas. When people start writing, they do not only write all their ideas. They need to convey and organize their ideas into a readable text that has some meanings. They have to think how to make their ideas can be understood easily.

Since writing is important, there are some types of text which are stated in syllabus for SMA students. One of them is recount text. Recount text has been taught at SMP and SMA grade ten, so that grade eleven students of SMA are expected to be able to produce this text. According to Anderson and Anderson (1997:48) "recount text is a piece of text which retells past events orderly and has a purpose to describe what have already happened". Similarly, Gerot and Wignel (1994:194) state "recount is retelling past events in order to inform or entertain about what and when it happened". Based on these theories, recounts are generally based on the direct experience of the author but it may also be imaginative or outside the author's experience. In recount text, a writer tells a reader about his/her personal experience or tells others experience to readers. In other words, recount text is a text which retells events or experience in the past.

In writing recount texts, students have to know the generic structure and language features of that text. According to Gerot and Wignel (1994:194), the generic structure of recount text is orientation, events and re-orientation.

Moreover, Roison et.al (2004:45) state that "the organization of recount text is orientation and followed by series of events, and sometimes it has evaluation or reorientation at the end of the text". Generally, recount texts begin with an orientation to introduce and give the background information that is needed to guide readers' understanding to next part of the story.

Besides generic structure, students must aware about language feature of recount text. According to Gerot and Wignel (1994:194) "language features of recount text are focus on specific participant, use of material processes (action verb), circumstances place, and time, use past tense, and focus on temporal sequence". Hardy and Klarwein (1990:4) add that "language features of recount text are use personal recount, use emotive to describe the events, use action verb and mental verb and use past tense". It can be said that writers will use action verb in past form in writing recount text.

In addition, Barwick (1999:6) states that there are some language features in recount texts. They are proper noun and pronoun to identify people, animal, or things. Then, the texts are written in past tense to retell past events. Writers can use varied action verb and adjective to show their feeling. Moreover, writers should include adverbs and adverbial phrases sequence events in time and indicate place. Finally, writers have to use conjunction to combine clauses and connectives to sequence events. Due to the explanation from several experts above, it can be concluded there are some language features of recount texts. They are focus on specific participant, use

simple past tense, use action verb, use linking verb, and use chronological conjunction.

The generic structures and language features of recount texts above were used as indicators to know students' ability in writing recount texts and their difficulties. Assessment is needed in writing. It is used to know how well the students can apply the theory they have already got and then practice it by writing. Weigle (2002:39) says that writing is a skill in language learning and all teachers need to evaluate their students' writing ability. It can be said that assessment is important for writing. Teachers can assess how the students' competency in writing to find the students' difficulties. To access students' writing ability in recount texts, scoring rubric was used. The scoring rubric was adapted from Hyland (2003:243)

Since writing is a complex process, there are some problems that can be found in process of writing. Heong et al (2013:15) states that "the difficulty of students in writing is in generating their ideas". The students are not able to transfer their ideas when they have to put it into the concrete one. It is supported by the research of Bitchener and Basturkmen (2006:14). They find that students could not organize their ideas and arguments by using appropriate styles of writing, and then express their thoughts clearly in English. In brief, the difficulty of writing is not only about developing the ideas but also how to make the ideas can be understood (Richards and Renandya, 2002:303). It means that when students want to convey their ideas, they have to think how make their ideas well organized to avoid readers confusing.

In addition, Farooq, et al (2012:186) state that "grammar is the most difficult part for L2 writers". Students get difficulties to write sentences in the correct structure. As Coffin, et al (2003:32) say "there are some aspects of English grammar that become ESL/EFL students' difficulties". They are choice of article, pronoun, verb tense, sentence agreement, etc. To support, this difficulty can be seen from the result of a case study done by Al-Buainain (2006). He found many misuse of verb tense in their writing. It is because the students do not understand well about tenses in English. They are not able to select correct verb based on the tenses they use when writing. Thus, the students' difficulties in writing are not only in producing ideas but they also have to think how to put them into sentences by using correct structure.

Besides some difficulties above, vocabulary is another difficulty that students face in writing. Vocabulary is "a core component of language proficiency, and it provides much of the basis for making learners speak, listen, read, and write well" (Richard and Renandya, 2002:255). Without mastering vocabulary, learners will have less opportunities to use their language learning around them such as listening to the radio, listening to native speakers, using the language in different contexts, reading, or watching television, and especially in writing, students will feel hard to present what in their mind. Strakey (2004:21) states "one of the best ways to convey ideas accurately in an essay is by choosing the right words". By doing this, students can ensure readers understanding about what they write. So, by using

appropriate words, writers can convince and attract readers' interest to read. Readers will keep reading when they find words that can give meaning for them and make them always remember those words. On the other hand, if writers use incorrect words and ambiguous, it will make readers feel confuse to understand the content of their writing recount text.

The difficulties faced by students above can occur because of some causes. According to Brown (2000:224), the students' error in writing are influenced by two major causes; interlingual and intralingual transfer. He states that interlingual transfer is a significant source of error for all learners. He explains that interlanguage is learner language, which emphasizes the separateness of a second language learners' system. He also defines interlingual as a system that has a structurally intermediate status between the native and target language. Interlingual is when the students of foreign language make structure deviation by the effect of their mother tongue. In other words, it is called language transfer. The difficulties occur because the features of source language and target language are different.

The second cause that can cause students' difficulties and errors in writing is intralingual transfer (Brown, 2000:224). Intralingual derives when the students make ungrammatical structure since they do not have enough knowledge of their target language. Intralingual errors result from faulty or partial learning of the target language rather than language transfer. Namely, learners make mistakes because they do not know the target language very

well, and have difficulties in using the target language. It can be said that students have lack knowledge of the target language. One of them is lack of grammar knowledge of the target language. As Richard and Renandya (2002:145) state "grammar is too important to be ignored, and without a good knowledge of grammar, learners' language development will be severely constrained". It means that the use of correct grammar will influence the sense of students' writing in order to catch readers interesting with the story that the students tell.

Besides two causes above, another cause that made students got difficulty in writing is lack of vocabulary. Lack of vocabulary makes what learners write become uninteresting, and boring (Farooq, et al., 2012:186). Lack of vocabulary makes students cannot express their ideas. They do not know what words they have to use to put their thought in their writing. Also, because of lack of vocabulary, the students use the same words in different context. This condition will affect the students' writing quality, because the choice of words in writing will influence the content of their writing. Readers will get difficulties to understand and comprehend students' writing because the words that are used will influence the meaning of the writing.

Finally, based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that there are some causes of students' difficulties in writing recount text. They are interlingual transfer and intralingual transfer. Interlingual is the negative influence of the mother tongue of learner and intralingual is the effect of forms of

one language (usually the target language) on other forms within the same language. Another cause of students' difficulties and error in writing are lack of vocabulary that can influence students' writing quality.

Based on the result of the preliminary research, it was found that 79% students could not write recount text well. The students did many mistakes in writing recount texts. One of the example is **I am go to rice field.** This example shows that the students did not understand about grammar. For recount text, the students should use past tense as the language feature. However, they still got difficulties to differentiate the tenses. They got confused to apply the correct grammar based on the text they write. Considering the fact that was faced, it was important to categorize the students' ability in writing recount texts in order to find other difficulties that students face when writing recount texts and find some causes of the difficulties.

B. Methodology of the Research

This research used quantitative approach. Through this approach, researcher did a research at tenth grade students in writing recount texts. Then, researcher collected the data to analyze and describe how their ability in writing recount texts and why they got difficulties in writing recount texts as Gay (2000:11) states "quantitative approaches are used to describe current conditions, investigates relationships, and study cause-effect phenomena".

The subject of this research was the students at grade X of SMA N 1 Sungai Limau. There were eight classes in which consist of 22 to 24 students as population. After the researcher got the population, the researcher took the sample. The sample was taken by using cluster sampling technique that is choosing a class randomly. For this research, the two classes of students were selected as sample. By drawing lots from the eight classes by writing each class's name on a piece of paper, rolling the piece, putting them in a box and drawing one. The two classes that were taken from the lots was selected as sample. The classes were X1 and X3.

The instrument for this research was writing test of recount text. Writing test was used in this research to find out the students' ability and their difficulties in writing recount text. For this research, students were asked to write a recount text based on some topics given. The researcher used the result of the test to analyze students' difficulties in writing recount text, and to find out some factors that made them get difficulties in writing recount text.

However, before doing writing recount test, the validity of the test was seen. Content validity was used to find out the validity of the test. "Content validity is the degree to which a test measures an intended content area" (Gay, 2000:163). It means that, the test that was used must be relevant with students' knowledge. Because of that, the researcher asked students to choose one of the topics from some topics given. Then, the topics that were chosen by students were used as topics for writing recount text test.

Based on the instrumentation of this research, there was quantitative data analysis. Quantitative data was analyzed by using the scoring rubric of recount text. The scoring rubric

for the writing test was constructed by using scale where the score is range from 4 to 1; 4 which indicates excellent, 3 which indicates good, 2 which indicates weak, and 1 which indicates poor. In addition, there were two scorers to score the students' writing to get the reliability of the test. This method is called interrater reliability (Gay, 2000:175).

In order to get general conclusion of this research, the researcher counted the average mark of the students' writing recount text. The researcher summed the score from the first and the second scorer and found the average of them. This average was the final score of the students' writing. After that, this final score was used to make the conclusion of the data finding of the research.

C. Finding and Discussion

1. Students' Ability in Writing Recount texts

The first finding of this research is students' ability in writing recount texts. The mean of students' ability in writing generic structures was 2.5. The score indicated that students have good ability. Then, the students' ability in using language feature was weak (2.3). The calculation of the total score which was scored by two scorers was averaged 2.3. The score was indicated that the students have weak ability in writing recount text.

Specifically, the score of students' ability in developing the term of orientation was 2.2 which indicates weak. Then, the score of students' ability in developing the term of events was 2.8 which indicates good. Meanwhile, the score of students' ability in developing the term of reorientation was 2.5 which indicates good.

In the term of using the language features, the students' writing ability was averaged 1.8 which indicates weak. The score of students' ability in using noun and pronoun was 2.4 which indicate weak ability. Then, the score of students' ability in using simple past tense was 1.5 which indicates very poor ability. In the term of using action verb, the students' writing was scored 1.6 which also indicates very poor ability. Furthermore, in term of using conjunction, the students were scored 2.6 which indicates good. Then, the students' ability in using linking verb and adjective were very poor with score 1.6.

2. Students' Difficulties in Writing Recount Texts

Based on the data analysis, it was found that students got difficulties in using language features of recount texts. First, students got difficulties in using simple past tense. Based on the data of students' test, it was found that students have poor ability in using simple past tense in their writing. It was proven by the data that students did mistakes 36% in using simple past tense.

The next difficulty that the students got in writing recount text was choosing correct action verb. Students did errors 35 % in using action verb. The use of action verb relates with the use of simple past tense. When the students use simple past tense as their tense in their writing, it means that students have to use action verb in form of past tense. On the other hand, based on students' writing test, it was found that the students have poor ability in using action verb.

Using linking verb was the next difficulty that students faced in

writing recount text is. Based on the data that the researcher found in students writing test, students have weak ability in using linking verb when writing recount text. Students did errors 18% in using linking verb. Most of students still got confused when they have to use linking verb. It was found that the students did not know which are adjective, verb, adverb, and noun. Their wiring showed that they used linking when they wanted to use it without thinking first. It can be said that the students did not know what linking verb is and its function that made them can use it freely.

The last difficulty faced by students in writing recount texts was using pronoun. there were some mistakes that students did in using pronoun. The students got difficulties to differentiate kinds of pronoun and their function. The students could not differentiate between subject pronoun; I, you, they, we, she, he and it, between object pronoun; me, you, them, us, her, him, and it. Then, students did mistake in choosing correct possessive adjective. From the example, it can be seen that one of the student used "his family" as possessive adjective of "my mother's sister" and it should be "her" because the subject pronoun of "my mother's sister is "she" not "he". This condition made misunderstanding between writers and readers. Readers will have different thought about the story with what the writers' mean.

3. Causes of Students' Difficulties in Writing Recount Texts

There were some causes that made students got difficulties in writing recount texts. The first cause is interlingual transfer. Interlingual transfer is one of important factor that make students difficult to write

their ideas because the features of Indonesia language is really different from English. From the data analysis, it was found that there were 91% students did interlingual transfer in their writing. They translated word by word into English. The different structure between Indonesia and English make students got confused when they wanted to transfer their ideas into written form. The way of students use Indonesia influence their way in using English. Because of this different language structures, students got difficulties when they tried to use English in the real form.

The next cause of students' difficulties in writing recount texts was intralingual transfer. Based on the data, all of students did grammar errors in their writing recount texts. students did many errors in choosing correct action verb, linking verb, pronoun and using correct simple past tense. Because of lack of grammar, students were not able to write their story in a good form. Their lack understanding about grammar made their writing became mess and their writing were difficult to be understood by readers.

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on the findingS, it can be concluded that the students' writing ability in recount texts at the tenth grade of SMA N 1 Sungai Limau is low. It is based on the analysis of all of indicators in this research, concerning with generic structure and language features of recount texts.

Then, the low of students' ability in writing recount texts is because some difficulties faced by students. The difficulties are dealing with the language features of recount texts. It is proven by the

data of students' writing recount texts. It was found that students did many mistakes in using simple past tense, action verb, linking verb, and pronoun.

In addition, based on the analysis of students' writing, it was found some causes that made students did some mistakes in writing recount texts. The first cause is interlingual transfer. The students' mother tongue was still influenced the way of students' writing. The next cause of students' difficulties is intralingual transfer. It related with the students' knowledge in using correct grammar. Students had lack of grammar knowledge that made them did many errors in their writing. The last cause of students' difficulties in writing recount texts is lack of vocabulary. Based on students' writing, it was found that students used some inappropriate vocabulary to show their ideas.

Based on the conclusions stated above, there are some implications that can be drawn. First, It can be implied that the tenth grade students of SMA N 1 Sungai Limau have low ability in English especially in writing skill. Second, it can be implied that the teaching and learning process was not successful yet. The writing process got less attention from the teachers. It also can be implied that students less of practice especially in writing.

Based on the findings and conclusion of this research, the researcher would like to give some suggestion as follows: it is suggested that teachers can emphasize the materials which relate to the use of language features in contexts. It is hoped that teachers may give several exercises which focus not only on arranging the components of language but also how to use it appropriately in the texts in order to decrease the students' difficulties writing texts.

It is also suggested that teachers are able to search and apply techniques in teaching writing. The technique in teaching writing should be able to promote the students' ability in arranging and relating the ideas, choosing the words, and using the tenses. Giving more exercise to the students is quite important to control the students' progress in writing ability, especially in developing the generic structure and language features. As well, teachers may offer feedback for the students' writing in order to improve the writing ability. Through this research, it is also hoped that teachers can distribute the result of the research to the students, thus students will know their weaknesses.

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