



An Analysis of Students' Language Features Understanding in Narrative Text: A Descriptive Study at SMPN 6 Gunung Talang

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze students' understanding of language features and the most difficult part of language features in narrative texts at SMPN 6 Gunung Talang. Descriptive research was the method used in this study with Grade eight students as the population. To determine the sample, the researcher used proportional random sampling where 30 eighth grade students were selected as samples in this study. There were two instruments used in this study which were tests and interviews. The results of the study showed that students' ability to understand language features in narrative texts showed an average score of 35.4. This score indicates that students generally fail to understand language features in narrative texts. Then, the most difficult part of the language features of narrative text for eighth grade students is the simple past tense with a percentage of 77% incorrect answers from 300 question occurrences.

Keywords:

Students' Understanding, The Language Features, Narrative Text

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INTRODUCTION

In the Merdeka curriculum, text plays a quite significant role. This is because, through the Merdeka curriculum, students' literacy skills are expected to develop, which is the key to acquiring knowledge, effective communication, and critical thinking skills. Rod et al (2019) stated Text is closely related to literacy, as it involves understanding, analyzing, and evaluating the information contained within it, which are crucial indicators of literacy. This literacy development includes students' ability to understand and analyze different types of text. Based on the learning outcomes set by the government at the junior high school level, or stage D, students are expected to communicate ideas and experiences through simple, structured paragraphs while showing progress in the use of specialized vocabulary and simple sentence structures. Using examples, they plan, write, and present informative, imaginative, and persuasive texts.

One indicator that needs to be considered to achieve progress in using special vocabulary and structured sentences in texts is the understanding of language features. Crystal (2008) states vocabulary rules and the structure of sentence use in a text are language features themselves. On the other hand, Gee (2023) stated the

importance of the language features systematically create meaning, convey messages effectively, and provide various communicative purposes, such as expressing emotions, representing identity, and building social reality. From the statements, it can be concluded that if a text does not comply with language features, the meaning, message and information contained in the text will not be conveyed to the reader.

In English language learning, besides understanding definition, purpose and generic structure of the text, understanding language features is always one of the learning achievements of text material in Merdeka curriculum. One of the text materials taught in grade 8 is Narrative Text. Derewianka & Jones (2016) stated that there are several part of language features in narrative text, which are specific human and non-human participants, action verbs, simple past tense, time conjunctions, and adverbs.

Grade 8 students at SMPN 6 Gunung Talang have studied narrative text material, but based on the English teacher's statement, generally grade 8 students at SMPN 6 Gunung Talang have low understanding of language features in narrative text. This statement is supported by the results of the pre-test and post-test conducted by the English teacher regarding narrative text material which did not reach the minimum score. Then, the teacher investigates the cause, in the learning process students are given the task of rewriting a narrative text, they already know some vocabulary but they cannot write the vocabulary into a correct sentence. They did not know the elements needed to write text so that what they mean did not match what they write. Then, they write English sentences using the style of writing Indonesian sentences which is caused by their ignorance of this language feature. In addition, the teacher also asked the students to identify and analyze narrative text.

The teacher founded that students got misinformation from the text. Some examples, they though character in fables as a human, and they did not know some past verbs so they though the word is not a verb. However, in this case the teacher can only concluded that the students' ability is low in understanding the language features of narrative texts, and did not know for sure which parts of the language features are very challenging and influence students' understanding whether it is specific human and non-human participants, action verb, simple past tense, time conjunction and adverb. As a result, learning outcomes where students are expected to be able to communicate ideas and experiences through simple and structured paragraphs while showing progress in the use of specialized vocabulary and simple sentence structures are not achieved.

Several researches on narrative text have been carried out. Some of them were done by Khoirunnisa and Widodo (2019)., Mustafa and Bakri (2020)., and Amelya et al (2022). Based on the finding it can be concluded that students' understanding of narrative texts tends to be low. This is caused by various factors such as low grammar skills, limited vocabulary, interpreting the meaning of each sentence, misunderstanding of information in the text. This factor is relevant to language features in texts which consist of grammar and vocabulary, where errors in grammar and vocabulary can cause misunderstanding and misinterpretation of meaning. Therefore, it can be concluded that language features are a problem that

needs to be studied further. Related to problem that the researcher found at SMPN 6 Gunung Talang from the researches above, the conclusion is language features have become a factor that causes difficulties experienced by students in understanding narrative text, and there has been no research that explains in detail how students understand the language features of narrative text either specific human and non-human participants, action verb, simple past tense, time conjunction and adverbs. Then, it is not yet known which parts of the language features the most difficult for students.

METHOD

The researcher used descriptive study in this research. The eight grade students of SMPN 6 Gunung Talang were the population. The sample selections used proportional random sampling because every class in grade eight at SMPN 6 Gunung Talang generally has problems in understanding the language features of Narrative text. Therefore, the researcher will randomly select 10 samples from each class of grade 8 at SMPN 6 Gunung Talang. Then, for the instruments, the researcher used test and interview. The consisted of 50 multiple choice that each indicator of language features of narrative text has 10 questions. Meanwhile, interviews were strengthening indicators of language features of the narrative text the students do not understand. The instruments validated by a lecturer of the English Department at Padang State University. The validator was Honesty Yonanda Ayudhia, S. Pd., M. Pd. The first step to analyze the test, the researcher scored the result of test. Then, to get the categorized score, the researcher measured the average score of students' understanding in the language features of narrative text. To find out, it is calculated using the following formula:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum(X)}{N}$$

Where:

X =mean of students' score

\sum =(x)=the sum of score

N = total numbers

After the researcher gets the score, the scores categorized. According to Arikunto (2006) where 80-100 is Very good, 66-79 is Good, 56-65 is Enough, 40-55 is Less and <39 categorized as Fail. Then, to analyze the most difficult part of language features in narrative text, the researcher displayed the correct and incorrect answer in a table and then calculated the percentage of score to each part of language features of narrative text and described the conclusion. Meanwhile, for the interview data the researcher will do data reduction and display the data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Finding

1. Students’ Understanding in Language Features of Narrative Text

Students’ understanding in language features of narrative text is analyzed by looking at their scores of the test. The students’ score and score category are shown from the table 4.2.

No	Name	Score	Category				
			Very good (80-100)	Good (66-79)	Enough (56-65)	Less (40-55)	Fail (<39)
1	AF	28					√
2	ARI	36					√
3	AP1	32					√
4	AM	30					√
5	AP2	30					√
6	AR	46				√	
7	BA	42				√	
8	ES	30					√
9	FA1	48				√	
10	FA2	26					√
11	FF	48				√	
12	H1	18					√
13	HA	20					√
14	H2	46				√	
15	JS	40				√	
16	LW	28					√
17	MM	22					√
18	MG	32					√
19	NAP	42				√	
20	PNN	30					√
21	PY	48				√	
22	RE	30					√
23	RZ	22					√
24	SN	42				√	
25	SAP	48				√	
26	SN	50				√	
27	UF	32					√
28	WM	46				√	
29	Z	32					√
30	ZAA	40				√	
Total Score		1064					
Mean		35,4					
Total			0	0	0	13	17

Table 4.2 students’ test score and category

From 30 students who have done the test, it can be seen that there are no students in the range of 80-100 in the very good category, no students in the range of 66-79 in the good category and no students in the range of 56-65 in the enough category. Meanwhile, for the category of less in the range of 40-55 there are 13

students and students who are categorized as fail are 17 students. Then, from the score of 30 students who did the test, the average score was 35.4. This score is in the range of scores under 39, which means that students are categorized as fail in understand language features in narrative text. In terms of student test results where the results are in the less and fail categories, it is known that they do not understand the language features in narrative text.

Then, from the interview data, it appears that students were unable to provide answers when asked about the language features in the narrative text. Although there were some students who could identify language features, they could only mention simple past tense as one of the important elements, while many other language features were still unknown to them. In this interview process, the researcher faced significant challenges in exploring students' understanding of the material that had been taught. In order to them remember about language features, they then provided with the example of language features of narrative text from the test questions.

From the data test and supported by interview above, it can be concluded that students that grade eight students are fail to understanding the concept of narrative text.

2. The Most Difficult Part of Language Features in Narrative Text

No	Name	The Language Features of Narrative Text									
		Specific human and non-human participants		Action verb		Simple past tense		Time conjunction		Adverbs	
		C	I	C	I	C	I	C	I	C	I
1	AF	4	6	2	8	2	8	3	7	3	7
2	ARI	3	7	2	8	4	6	4	6	5	5
3	AP1	3	7	1	9	4	6	4	6	4	6
4	AM	4	6	3	7	2	8	3	7	3	7
5	AP2	4	6	3	7	2	8	3	7	3	7
6	AR	8	2	7	3	0	10	3	7	5	5
7	BA	5	5	7	3	3	7	3	7	3	7
8	ES	4	6	3	7	2	8	3	7	3	7
9	FA1	5	5	6	4	6	4	2	8	5	5
10	FA2	3	7	4	6	1	9	2	8	3	7
11	FF	9	1	7	3	1	9	3	7	4	6
12	H1	2	8	2	8	1	9	2	8	2	8
13	HA	2	8	3	7	1	9	1	9	3	7
14	H2	6	4	5	5	5	5	7	3	0	10
15	JS	6	4	5	5	1	9	4	6	4	6
16	LW	4	6	5	5	1	9	1	9	3	7
17	MM	2	8	2	8	2	8	2	8	3	7
18	MG	4	6	2	8	3	7	3	7	4	6
19	NAP	6	4	7	3	5	5	2	8	1	9
20	PNN	4	6	4	6	1	9	2	8	4	6
21	PY	9	1	7	3	0	10	3	7	5	5
22	RE	5	5	4	6	1	9	1	9	4	6
23	RZ	2	8	3	7	1	9	3	7	2	8
24	SN	5	5	6	4	6	4	3	7	1	9
25	SAP	5	5	8	2	5	5	4	6	2	8
26	SN	8	2	8	2	0	10	3	7	6	4
27	UF	5	5	4	6	1	9	2	8	4	6
28	WM	8	2	6	4	2	8	3	7	4	6
29	Z	5	5	3	7	2	8	3	7	3	7
30	ZAA	7	3	5	5	4	6	2	8	2	8

Total	147	153	134	166	69	231	84	216	98	202
Percentage	49%	51%	44,6%	55,3%	23%	77%	28%	72%	32,6%	67,3%

Table 4.4 percentage of student answers per indicator

Based on table 4.2, it is known that there are five indicators of language features in narrative text. The first is human and non-human participants. From 300 total occurrences of questions about human and non-human participants in narrative text, there are 147 or 49% correct answers and 153 or 51% incorrect answers. That means the percentage of incorrect answers is higher than the percentage of correct answers. Then from the interview data, it can be seen that students' knowledge about participants in the text is still limited and students are fixated on the title of the text.

The second is action verbs. From 300 total occurrences of questions about action verbs in narrative text, there are 134 or 44,6% correct answers and 166 or 55,3% incorrect answers. The incorrect answers are also higher than the correct answer. Based on the interview, there are misunderstandings and limitations in students' understanding of action verbs in narrative texts. Students show a tendency to identify action verbs by only relying on the ending "-ed" as the main indicator. Although some action verbs in narrative texts end in "ed", which is in regular verbs in the past tense, this also shows low and limited understanding. Students' ability to identify irregular verbs shows basic knowledge of the variation of verb forms in English. In addition, another factor that made students had difficulty in determining and identifying the correct action verb was that they have a limited vocabulary, so they were unable to choose an action verb that was relevant to the story.

The third is simple past tenses. From 300 total occurrences of questions about simple past tenses in narrative text, there are 69 or 23% correct answers and 231 or 77% incorrect answers. This percentage has shown that the majority of students failed to answer questions about the simple past tense. Then, from the interview results it is known that although the simple past tense is the most familiar language features indicator for students. They rely heavily on regular verbs to identify the simple past tense, even though not all simple past tense sentences use regular verbs. In addition, students are also confused about the use of auxiliary verbs, the word order that is in accordance with the correct simple past tense sentence structure and have difficulty in distinguishing the types of words including subject, verb and object or compliments. In addition, students also still have difficulty in distinguishing the use of be in the simple past tense.

The fourth is time conjunctions. From 300 total occurrences of questions about time conjunctions, it was found that there were only 84 or 28% correct answers and incorrect answers reached 216 answers or 72%. This is also a high percentage. From the interview results, it is known that the main obstacle faced by students was the difficulty in understanding the meaning or translation of time conjunctions. Students stated that they used time conjunctions based on what they knew the translation or examples of sentences that were familiar to them

The last one is adverbs. From 300 total occurrences of questions about adverbs, it was found that there were only 98 or 32,6% correct answers and incorrect answers reached 202 answers or 67,3%. This showed that there were more incorrect answers than correct answers. From the results of interviews with students, it was found that the problems they faced were almost the same as the difficulties they experienced at the time of conjunctions. Many students do not yet know the

translation of words in English, so they are unable to determine the right and relevant words to complete the text. This difficulty often causes them confusion when faced with questions that require contextual understanding of words.

Discussion

Based on the findings, students' understanding of language features narrative text classified as failed because the average of the result of score is under 39 and the most difficult part of language features for students and the highest percentage of incorrect answers is simple past tense. In simple past tense, it was found that students were unable to determine the sentence structure; unable to determine subject, verb, object; unable to distinguish regular verbs and irregular verbs; think that every verbs in simple past tense is added with -ed at the end of the word; and confused in the use of be and auxiliary verbs in sentences.

The findings of this study are related to research conducted by Mardiana et al (2021). The result of research showed that language features are factors that cause students' difficulties in reading descriptive text which are categorized as high difficulty levels up to 60%. In fact, this is one of the important indicators that students must know to understand the text. Moreover, Ilham (2022) founded that one of the factors that causes students to have difficulty in understanding narrative texts and difficulty in reaching 60% is language features. Narrative texts have more complex language features compared to other types of texts, which makes students feel difficult. As a result, students often have difficulty when working on questions given by the teacher. One of the main difficulties faced is distinguishing between past tense verbs and other verbs. This inability makes it difficult for them to understand the flow and context of the story in narrative texts.

The finding of students get difficulty in simple past tense are related with a research conducted Rianti (2022). The result of research showed that based on the scores from the multiple-choice test, the researchers concluded that the second-grade students at Universitas Pahlawan Tuanku Tambusai have a low understanding in using the simple past tense, with an average score of 30.16. Only 2 students (6.25%) fell into the "good" category, 6 students (18.75%) were in the "medium" category, 11 students (34.37%) were in the "poor" category, and 13 students (40.63%) were in the "low" category. No students reached the "very good" category. This indicates that many students still struggle with understanding the formula of the simple past tense.

CONCLUSION

This research is a research that aimed to analyze students understanding in language features narrative text and to analyze the most difficult part of language features narrative text. Then, based on the research it founded that from the test results conducted, students' ability to understand language features in narrative texts showed an average score of 35.4. This score indicates that students generally fail to understand language features related to narrative texts.

In addition, the most difficult part for students in understanding the language features of narrative texts is simple past tense. Although simple past tense is the indicator most familiar to students, they have difficulty in determining the correct word order in the simple past tense formula. This difficulty includes their inability to

distinguish parts of a sentence, such as subject, verb, and object. Students can only identify simple past tense when there are regular verbs, but they have difficulty when faced with irregular verbs. In addition, students are also unable to indicate how to form correct verbal and nominal sentences, and students lack of understanding of basic concepts the use of auxiliary verb and the use of be. This inability hinders them from forming sentences that are in accordance with grammatical rules, thus affecting their understanding of narrative texts as a whole.

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