

An Analysis of Students' Lexical Choice in Writing Descriptive Text

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ABSTRACT

Writing is become the one of difficult skill to learn especially in EFL context. Students have problems when formulating words while doing writing assignments. This very important to investigate student problem while do writing especially on lexical choice that student utilize in writing descriptive. The corpus can also be used for examines sentence writing structure and word selection that can be seen and synchronized very effectively. The importance of this research is to be able to know the capacity of students when doing writing task and how their writing product can be better. it can be ascertained that from student writing samples that have been analyzed, there are 10.2% high frequency, 2.5% mid frequency, and 87.3% low frequency. This identifies that in writing students still tend to use familiar words to make a sentence. Based on the aspects of discovery that have been mentioned, students' ability to write still needs to be improved again, especially in the selection of several adjectives and pronouns.

Key words: Writing Descriptive, English Corpus, Lexical Choice.

A. INTRODUCTION

Writing is become the one of difficult skill to learn especially in EFL context. Researcher found this after conducting teaching practicum at Senior High Schools. Students have problems when formulating words while doing writing assignments. As EFL students, they always use the same few words to represent words that have the same meaning. Meanwhile, many words that have the same meaning with different spellings can be used to replace the same word in a sentence or paragraph to make the text more varied.

The author agrees with Klimova (2014) who states that, writing skill grow into the most difficult to gained especially as foreign language, because it requires a high capability of the target language to fulfill, any appropriate instruction must take into consideration the influence from various educational, social, and cultural experiences that students have in their native language. On the other side, Sayukti and Kurniawan (2018) believe that, learning English as foreign language make them difficult how to implement their native language (L1) to target language (L2), because both of it have different linguistic system and make it cause an error in

representing the text. Grounded to the statement, to learn about writing student should have many experiences to enhance their ideas while in writing process.

Okamoto (2015) claims that, students in the EFL context must at least master the level of mid-frequency of lexical which is about 4000-7000 words to make good writing outcome. Also Schmitt and Schmitt (2012) point out that, there are three lexical level frequencies: low, mid, and high frequency that can identified student level of lexical choice. That why, how to enhance and found out student lexical level frequency is very important to identified students ability in writing skill. Teacher can make the appropriate teaching writing strategy to identified student lexical frequency level.

Since the researcher doing teaching practicum at senior high school found that student at English class especially for grade 10th have a serious problem when doing writing text. They make some mistaken when choosing the appropriate word in their own sentence in writing activity. Students always use the same word over and over again when they write a sentence so that there is no word variation in the writing of the text.

This issue attracted author to analysis the level of student as EFL learner in mastering vocabulary. Because many students hard to understand the structure and language future of appropriate text so they can't develop the idea of the sentence clearly to give information about the topic of the text. Finally, Descriptive text is a one of text that can be choice as a media to analyze student lexical choice in learning writing. Then, utilize of Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) to look for the frequency of lexical choice that students use.

Literature Review

In regard to the related studies conducted about the similar issue, there are four relevant types of research reviewed. The first research was conducted by Samburskiy (2014). This study focused on how student can use corpus to help them in understanding the pedagogical grammar use in writing activity. Then, he suggest as English teacher should be familiar with this new trend in language pedagogy and take advantage of what it has to offer. He found that while in writing student would be able to recognize their lexical choice to the corpus and make sure they can utilize the appropriate words that can be fulfill the language future of the type of text to avoid words mistaken while in writing process.

The second studies have been conducted by Kazemi, Katiraei, & Rasekh (2014). They studied about the impact of teaching lexical bundles on improving EFL students' writing skill. This experimental research focused on to found out of the lexical bundles can give the positive of negative impact to student writing outcome. Furthermore, they found that by using teaching lexical bundles in teaching writing would give a positive impact to their writing skill. There are any different score that student got before and after they learn with lexical bundles. By using this strategy

student especially as EFL students more enjoyable to write and reduce their awareness in writing activity while choosing word. But, even at advanced levels many students still does not get understand about recurrent sequences of word.

The third studies have been conducted by Hsu (2018) in medical school China. This studied focused on how student can mastered their lexical proficiency to the low, middle, or high level of medicine or specific word of science. He found that medical academy student in china that have a low capability in lexical proficiency would be difficult to understand many of type of medicine and the middle ones would be standard to identified the characteristic of the herb and natural medicine and soon. This research conclude that student with middle level of lexical proficiency would be able to understand every matching word while doing writing to avoid common mistake and repeatable word in writing medicine recipe. This result prove that student with enough capability will provide a good writing outcome.

The last studies have been conducted by Okamoto (2015) in Osaka. This study focused on to identified corpus to facilitate student lexical choice in writing activity. He found that there any different ability student with low and middle lexical choice frequency. Student with low level frequency at least produce same type of word while doing writing, but student with middle level frequency more use variation like synonym or antonym in their writing outcome. This result can be concluded that lexical level have a role in enhancing student writing skills.

Based on several previous studies, researchers believe that students' writing skills, especially in the context of lexical choices, should be better. Some students still find it very difficult to distinguish the language structure or grammar arrangement when they are writing text in English. This is based on some of the opinions or research results above which state that EFL students are very difficult to adapt new words, especially in the context of a foreign language into a writing or description.

Nunan (2003: 88) highlight, writing is both a physical and a mental act. Writing, at its most basic level, is the physical act of committing words or ideas to some media. Writing on the other hand, is the cerebral process of developing ideas, deciding how to convey them, and structuring them into statements and paragraphs that are understandable to a reader. Grounded to the statement It can be conclude that writing is an activity to use the structures, the lexical items and ideas in the form of paragraph, in other word writing is complex process that allows students to explore thoughts and ideas, and make them visible and concrete that be arranged based on the certain rule and communicated them clearly to other, informally and or formally. The one of the best writing activity is descriptive text.

Descriptive is a written English text in which the writer to represent an object. In this text, the object can be someone or something to describe. Descriptive text is a text containing two structures such as identification and description. Kane

(2000) highlight that descriptive text is talk about the experience of the writer that can be imagine and write the detail of something or someone with the looks, sounds, and tastes. It could be said that descriptive is about visual experience, but the description also deals with objective and subjective perception.

According to Sudarwati and Grace (2007, p. 135) cited from Pahmi and Yoskavia (2016), descriptive text has several descriptions, they are:

1. Generic Structure of Descriptive Text
 - a. Identification: If the object is a person, the writer needs to mention the detail information.
 - b. Description: If the object is a person, the writer needs to mention the physical features of it, the example if he or she dresses and his or her personality
2. Language Features of Descriptive Text
 - a. Using adjectives and compound adjectives such as black and attractive and handsome
 - b. Using linking verbs such as look, seem, felt, and etc
 - c. Using attributive has and have

It means that the reader will get a clear picture of the phenomenon or subject which is described in English descriptive text. Furthermore, using adjective in compose descriptive text is up the writer to create excitement, interest, and attracting with their lexical choice.

Lexical choice is really give an effect in writing activity, a good choices of the lexical can make output of the text more informative. Student should know there are many words that have synonym and has similar meaning. Besides, the choice of words matters the meaning of a sentence. Fu and Guan (2020) pinpoint that some synonyms are similar but not completely identical in meaning. Subtle differences among synonyms exist universally. In writing, the subtle difference of synonyms should be taken into account. So that in determining the correct words in writing should look for the right reference so that there are no misunderstandings in writing and providing information. Furthermore lexical choice has 3 kind of level proficiency High, Middle, and low frequency of word.

Lexical Frequency is a total how many times the word will be appeared on the text. That word will be have a count and classification as a low, middle, or high frequency words. Schmitt and Schmitt (2014) claim that there are three grades of lexical frequency level there are Low-frequency, Mid-frequency, and High-frequency. They also clarified amount of the value of any frequency: (3000+ words) as High-frequency, (4000-7000 words) as Mid-frequency, and (9000+ words) as Low-frequency. The values obtain from comparing between British National Corpus (BNC) and Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA).

COCA is the only large, genre-balanced corpus of American English. It is probably the most widely-used corpus of English, and it is related to many other corpora of English that have been created, which offer unparalleled insight into variation in English. The corpus contains more than 560 million words of text (20 million words each year 1990-2017) and it is equally divided among spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic texts. McEnery et al., (2006, as cited in Hajiyevea, 2015) explain that there are many ways to define a corpus, but consensus is gaining ground that a corpus is a collection of (1) machine-readable (2) authentic texts which is (3) sampled to be (4) representative of a particular language or language variety. Therefore, a corpus is needed to analyze the data that has been obtained from the students' writing results so that the assessment in writing is much more accurate.

The corpus can also be used for examines sentence writing structure and word selection that can be seen and synchronized very effectively. based on the type of frequency provided allows each word to have a different level depending on how many words have been used in a sentence. That statement makes sure that Corpora are gaining importance in teaching L2 writing. As concordance lines for particular words provide learners with useful frequency and contextual information, accessing corpus evidence while writing can promote learner autonomy and self-editing.

Finally, this study would focus on finding out to what extent students have mastered various and precise word choices in writing a descriptive text. The equation of this research with previous research is regarding several methods or theories used to analyze data and categorize the data that has been obtained. In previous research, various reasons and tests have also been explained about how students have difficulty mastering writing skills and also described various techniques for these tests. As for the difference between this research and the research that has been done above, the researchers were more focused on finding out the level of word selection that students will use in writing descriptive and how far the students have mastered them.

B. The Research Design

The design of this research was descriptive research because it described the lexical choice made by the ten grades of senior high school students in writing descriptive text as stated in research objectives in the previous chapter. Anderson and Arsenault (2005:107) state that a description research design can produce two different outputs is like qualitative or quantitative. Quantitative description is based on counts or measurements which are generally mention such as frequencies, means, standard deviations and ranges. Then Qualitative descriptive is presented by prose or interview to collecting data. Based on the statement quantitative description would be used for counting the percentage how many student can identified high,

intermediate, or low level of vocabulary proficiency. Furthermore, qualitative descriptive is a technique on how to write the finding data through qualitative descriptive. Qualitative method is used when the research aims to describe phenomena; and the data used are opinion (interview), behavior, and document which are not analyzed using statistics pattern. Data collection of the qualitative descriptive studies focuses on finding the nature of the specific events research. Data collection also may include observations, and examination of records, reports, photographs, and documents. This research used qualitative descriptive design means the data collected by using document study.

1. Participants

The subject of this research was ten grades students in SMA N 1 Banyuwangi. Random sampling was applied because each member of the population has an exactly equal chance of being selected. By using this method the researcher would selected 10 students form the class population to be identified.

2. Instruments

The mainly instrument was writing performance test to ten grade students. Students were assigned to write a descriptive text by choosing one of the topics provided. The writing test was not conducted to measure the students' writing ability in writing descriptive text but to find the vocabulary proficiency in students' writing. Hence, the writing test was administered to get the data about the students' ability to compose writing descriptive text. The other types of errors that were found were ignored and not calculated. The writing test was conducted in 60 minutes. The students were allowed to consult with their dictionary.

3. Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was allowed by teacher of then grade class and get permission from principal of SMAN 1 Banyuwangi. Upon approval, teaching materials were distributed to all the respondents of the study. Thereafter, the data were tallied, statistically treated, and analyzed to shed light and understanding on the results of the investigation

4. Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the data using descriptive quantitative method. The data analyzed through document study. The researcher has completed the following steps. To analyze the first research question, the researcher counting the number of word frequency of student descriptive text, after that the researcher calculate and determine the grade level of vocabularies. Then, identifying the all of the word frequency made by the students, the researcher made a table as the data tabulation then described the results of the data tabulation of word frequency made by the students.

Lastly, the researcher evaluated the word frequency made by the students. It involved deciding which one should receive more instruction based on the criticalness of each word type. The researcher analyzed why there was a certain type of word mostly made by the students and the least made by the students. Furthermore, the researcher calculates and determines the grade level used basic descriptive statistic formula to analyze the data. Then describing the result and giving explanation related to vocabulary proficiency level. Determine the grade of the writing text according basic descriptive statistic formula which one is relevant or suitable to Senior high School level. This formula is became the most widely used formula and one of the most tested and reliable. The researcher used the following formula which was adapted from Healey (2010: 30) to calculate the result from data tabulation:

$$\% = \frac{f}{n} \times 100$$

Notes:

%= the percentage of the students' vocabulary proficiency of each component

f = total number of low, intermediate, and high level vocabularies

N = the total number of word that students made in descriptive text

C. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The research is based on the competence of students in one of the schools where researchers practice teaching. It is known that the students collected in the education unit are combined into one class called the English language interest class. From the results of observations that have been made by researchers, several data were obtained that cover several aspects in mastering English skills, especially writing. Then researchers got results from some student writings that still use repetitive vocabulary in writing a text. Therefore, testing and analysis were carried out to find out how active and creative students are in composing a sentence, especially in writing a description text.

The test was carried out and the results were obtained from the student's writing which he then analyzed and it was known how many percentages between vocabularies that had been used in composing sentences. Furthermore, frequency measurements can be done using COCA to find out how many frequencies each word is used in composing a text. Sulking in several sources there are 3 level variants of the word frequency, namely High, Mid, and Low. Then, from the results of the analysis carried out by the researcher, the following data were obtained.

<i>f</i>	S ¹	S ²	S ³	S ⁴	S ⁵	S ⁶	S ⁷	S ⁸	S ⁹	S ¹⁰	Mean
High	8%	9%	4%	21%	7%	12%	12%	6%	6%	17%	10.2%
Mid	1%	0%	0%	2%	2%	2%	8%	5%	1%	4%	2.5%

Low	91%	91%	96%	77%	91%	86%	80%	89%	93%	79%	87.3%
Total											100%

Table of The frequency of student writing results

Based on the table above, it can be ascertained that from 10 students writing samples that have been analyzed, there are 10.2% high frequency, 2.5% mid frequency, and 87.3% low frequency. This identifies that in writing students still tend to use familiar words to make a sentence. The use of synonyms is not so noticed in writing that it gives rise to repetition of words that cause some meanings of a sentence to look uncompromising. It is also based on the use of pronouns that should have a great many synonyms not being put to good use.

Furthermore, mid frequency words are also very rarely used. 2.5% is a very small number however mid frequency itself is actually a combination of words that may be rarely used so this percentage indicates that there are at least a few students who are still and a little familiar with nouns, adjectives, or verbs that belong to the mid frequency of this word. While on the other hand, low frequencies that have up to 87% ratio are identified as some words that are very common to use such as conjunctions, adverbs, and prepositions. So this percentage is naturally said to be high because of some of these factors.

a. High frequency level

From the results of the analysis, it can be explained that some of the high frequency words used by students mostly come from naming a place, individuals specifically, and some pronouns or properties. This gives rise to several speculations that can be taken and used as a reference to determine what things are actually included in the writing of a text. Moreover, in writing a description sentence, it is required to identify the subject or object in detail and thoroughly.

b. Mid Frequency level

A very small percentage is not too much of a reference in writing. This is based on some words that are at this level, which is indeed a fairly rarely thought-about thing such as the naming of weight units as an example. The word in this infrequent use as a person ignores or may not even include in detail in the writing so that the percentage of appearance of the mid frequency of this word is quite small compared to the high or low word level.

c. Low frequency level

The description of the high percentage of the use of the word low frequency is very understandable, because some of the wording used is a word that is very commonly encountered and used when composing a sentence. Some of these very familiar words include connecting words, adverbs, and others that are commonly used in composing a sentence. The magnitude of this percentage also concludes that students really understand how they can make and compose a sentence to seem

much more expressive for their readers so as not to cause confusion in reading and understanding the information that has been written.

D. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the aspects of discovery that have been mentioned, students' ability to write still needs to be improved again, especially in the selection of several adjectives and pronouns of people. There it is mentioned that students still use the same word more often in writing descriptive sentences so that the delivery of each word cannot describe shorter and clearer information about the object to be described. Then, the use of the word mid-frequency also needs to be considered so that the description of each component can be understood more easily, especially in terms of information about the location or other information that needs to be added. Then, the use of dictionaries also needs to be considered carefully so that students can choose more varied words in writing descriptive so that the information provided is not ambiguous or misguided.

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