STUDENTS' ABILITY IN COMPREHENDING LANGUAGE FEATURES OF DESCRIPTIVE TEXT

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Abstract

Reading is one of the four abilities needed for learner to learn English as a second or foreign language. For those who learn English as a second language, descriptive text is a common material that they learn in reading. Meanwhile, in this research, the researcher focuses on investigating the language features. The research used a descriptive design and a quantitative approach. The population of this research was ELSP students Batch 2019 of Lambung Mangkurat University of Banjarmasin. A grammar test was used as the instrument in this research. Data analysis of this research was using Microsoft Excel to describe students' ability in comprehending language features of descriptive text. Based on the research findings, the result shows that the students almost comprehend all of the language features especially present tense. It has the highest number of percentage students' correct answers. It is hoped this study will inform the students about language features in descriptive text. For other researchers, the result of this research can be used as the preliminary study to the other researchers to conduct further research about the students' ability in comprehending language features in descriptive text

.**Keywords:** Reading, Language Features, Descriptive Text

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the four necessary language skills for those learning As a second or foreign language, English is used. Reading is a crucial guideline since it is one action that we cannot do without in our lives to find information or knowledge from written material, such as a textbook, journal, or article. Therefore students must be able to read properly to help study in academics term. Reading is a linguistic receptive process. This is the process of recognizing, understanding, and perceiving written or printed materials. Through this activity, students can improve their language, gain experience, knowledge, or thoughts. The students must read it carefully and try to understand the idea from the written material. Understanding the material helps the reader or the student to understand what is being read. In reading activities, reading understanding is also important. According to Heilman (1981:242), reading understanding is the process by which written ideas are interpreted and interacting to make sense of them. It means that the reader interacts as he reads the written material and attempts to get the idea. Description text is a common material for those who learn English as a second language.

Descriptive text is some sort of writing that includes an object, location, person, etc. as describing, characterizing, or defining something. The students must read the idea carefully and try to understand it in order to get an idea from the written material. Understanding the material helps the reader or the student to understand the purpose of what is read. In the reading activity, reading understanding is also important. The process of understanding reading is according to Heilman (1981:

242) the interpretation and interaction with written ideas so that they are taken into account. This means that the reader interacts as he reads the written material and tries to get the idea. Description text is a common material they learn when reading English as a second language. According to Jaya, et al (2008: 14) descriptive text uses; specific nouns, adjectives, relating verbs, noun phrases, action verbs, present tense, and thinking verb.

Descriptive text is essential to the student in teaching and learning English in particular. If the student understands the language functionality, the purpose of the text is also easier to understand.

Review of Literature

Definition of Reading

Reading is the part that should be understood, however; the reader must know the information in the text more. Nevertheless, it is widely accepted that reading skill is " a cognitive ability which a person can use when interacting with written texts" (Urquhart & Weir, 1998: 88) and few would dispute that this concept is useful for structuring the teaching and the learning of reading. Therefore, for teaching purposes, it is important to define which skills students have to develop. To be able to read effectively. However, reading is a language process, because reading is important for the students to get information. The readings stated by Anderson (1991) are an active and fluent process involving readers and reading materials. Meaning does not reside on the printed page, nor is it only in the reader.

Definition of Descriptive Text

Yudantoro (2010: 7) defines that descriptive text is a text that has a purpose to describe a particular person, place, or thing. It means it is a text that describes a person, place, and event or describes someone's idea about something. Jackson and Stockwell (2011:84) stated that descriptive text is a text that explains something is likes, to give its characteristic, uses, and so on. They also said that descriptive text is often written in the present tense, and the most commonly used verbs are and have, an adjective like tall, brown, and dark are used to describe characteristics of the thing being described. Besides, according to Pardiyono (2007:34) describe text is a type of written text, which has a specific function to describe an object (human or non-human). In other words, it describes living or non-living things. Objects such as people, animals, or plants for living things.

Generic Structure of Descriptive Text

The generic structure is divided into two parts in the descriptive text. The generic descriptive text structure, as stated in Mulyono (2008:22,) consists of a phenomenon and description identification describing the parts, qualities, and characters of the phenomenon. Specific participants then focus on the language features and use the simple tense of the day. The text's rhetorical structure is identification and description, Pardiyono (2007:34). Identification is a statement containing the object and a description has the object details. Based on the two experts above, the writer concludes the generic structure of descriptive texts is identification and description. Identification is an introductory paragraph that defines the object. Then, the description contains a characteristic of the object.

Language Features of Descriptive Text

"The text description has language properties that include the process identifier, classical groups of nominals, simple present tense, specific nouns using a phrase in detail for the purposes of providing information on the subject, various adjectives that describe, related verbs for information on the subject, action verbs and adverbs to provide more information on the subject", Gerot and Wignell (1994: 28) stated. According to Jaya, et al (2008: 14), a descriptive text uses:

a. Specific Noun

A noun, according to Merriam Webster, is a type of word that can be combined with determiners such as 'a' or 'an'. A noun is usually his principal topic in the descriptive text, which is always referred to in each paragraph.

b. Adjective

According to Merriam Webster, the adjective is a word in one of the major classes of form in many languages, typically used to alter a noun to denote the quality or quantity of the thing named or to specify something other than anything else.

c. Relating verb/ Linking verb

The connection of information or relation in a sentence is used with the connection of related verbs. The related verb also provides the subject information. The verb links do not express action, they connect the verb subject to further information on the subject.

d. Action Verb

Verbs for action are verbs that express what the sentence is doing. These types of verbs contain a lot of information and serve to complete the sentence.

e. Simple Present Tense

According to Azar (2003: 4), the simple present tense expresses daily habits or routine activities. Swan (2005: 448) claims that when we talk about permanent situations or things that happen on a regular or continuous basis (rather than just now), we usually use the simple present tense.

f. Noun Phrase

A noun phrase is a phrase that contains a noun or a pronoun as its head and serves the same grammatical function as a phrase. Noun phrases are frequently used as verb subjects and objects, as predicative expressions, and as prepositional complements.

g. Thinking Verb

The purpose of the thinking verb is to express the writer's personal opinion on the subject. Thinking verbs serve five functions, according to the Macmillan dictionary.

METHOD

Research Approach and Design

The researcher determined that a descriptive design and a quantitative approach were appropriate based on the research objective. Descriptive studies attempt to describe a given state of affairs as completely and precisely as possible (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006: 14). Quantitative research, according to Gay et al. (2012: 7), is the collection and analysis of numerical data to describe, explain, predict, or control phenomena of interest.

Subject of the Research

The researcher chooses English Language Education Program of Lambung Mangkurat University Batch 2019 as the subject of this research.

Instrument

The instrument for this study is a test to evaluate students' ability to understand language characteristics in descriptive texts. The whole process of data collection preparation, according to Fraenkel and Wallen (2005: 113). This involves not only the selection or design of instruments but also the procedures and conditions under which they will be administered.

Data Collection

To collect the necessary data, the researcher employs an objective test to assess reading students' ability to comprehend language features in reading descriptive text. According to Arikunto (2010: 193), a test is a series of questions or exercises, as well as other tools, that are used to assess individuals' or groups' skills, intelligence, knowledge, abilities, or talents.

Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis for the analysis of data is used in this research. The analysis is carried out in these steps after the data collection has been completed:

1. Calculating the validity and reliability of the test.
2. Scoring the students' answer test.
3. Describe the percentage of students' comprehending language features in descriptive text.
4. Draw the conclusion based on all research findings.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The data were collected through the test in google form due to the covid-19 pandemic. It was used to find students' comprehending of language features in descriptive text.

1. Specific Noun

A total of six questions were asked about specific nouns. The following diagram shows the proportion of students who have correctly replied. All the specific noun questions can be answered correctly by ten students. Seven students can answer five questions correctly. There are four students able to answer 4 questions correctly, six students can answer 3 questions correctly, one student can answer 2 questions correctly, one student may answer one question correctly and one student cannot answer the question properly.

Table 4.1
Graphic of Students'correct answer in Specific Noun of Descriptive text
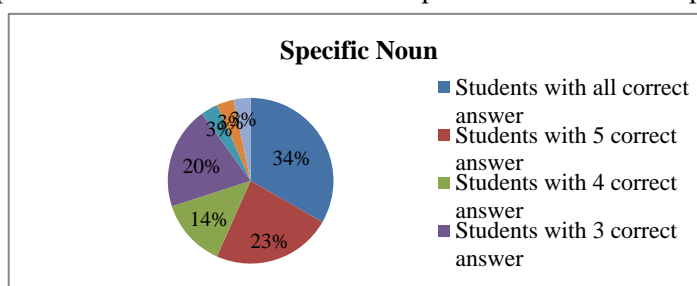
2. Adjectives

A total of six questions related to adjective-noun material. The following graph shows the proportion of correct student responses. All adjective questions can be answered correctly by 14 students. Five students can reply to five questions correctly. 4 questions can be answered correctly by six students; 3 correctly answered by students; 1 properly answered by one student and 1 not properly answered by one question.

Table 4.2
Graphic of students' correct answer in Adjective of Descriptive text
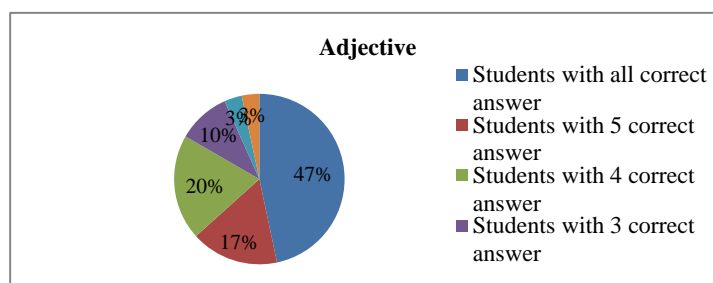
3. Relating Verb/Linking Verb

Five questions concerning the verb/link verb existed. The following graph shows the number of answers given by students. 4 students can correctly answer all questions, 12 can correctly answer 4 questions, 8 can answer 3 correctly, 2 can respond properly to 2 questions, and 4 can answer 1 correctly.

Table 4.3
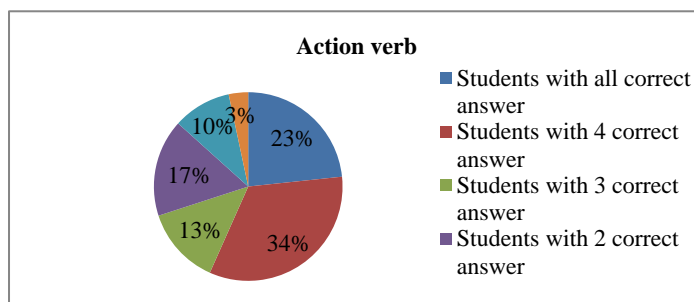Graphic of Students' Correct Answer in Linking Verb of Descriptive text
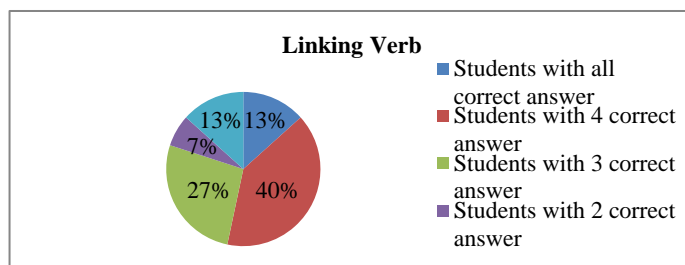
4. Action Verb

There were five questions about an action verb. The graph below depicts the percentage of students who answered correctly. 7 students can correctly answer all questions, 10 students can correctly answer 4 questions, 4 students can correctly answer 3 questions, 5 students can correctly answer 2 questions, 3 students can correctly answer 1 question, and 1 student cannot correctly answer all questions.

Table 4.4
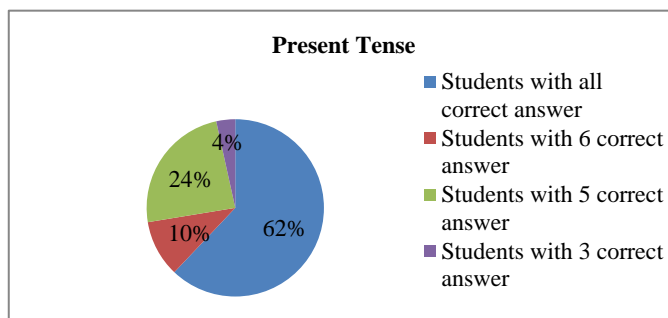Graphic of Students' Correct Answer in Action Verb of Descriptive text

5. Present Tense

There were seven present tense questions. The graph below depicts the percentage of students who answered correctly. 3 students can correctly answer all questions, 18 students can correctly answer 6 questions, 7 students can correctly answer 5 questions, and 1 student can correctly answer 3 questions.

Table 4.5
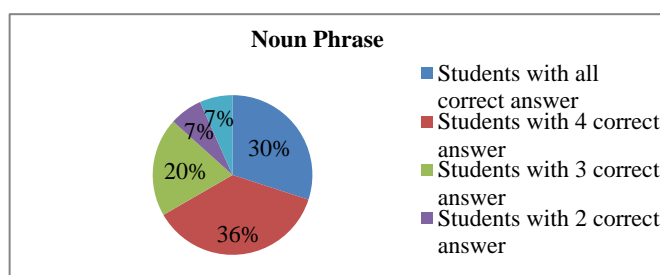Graphic of Students' Correct Answer in Present Tense of Descriptive text

6. Noun Phrase

There were five noun phrase questions. The graph below depicts the percentage of students who answered correctly. 9 students can correctly answer all questions, 11 students can correctly answer 4 questions, 6 students can correctly answer 3 questions, 2 students can correctly answer 2 questions, and 2 students can correctly answer 1 question.

Table 4.6
Graphic of Students' Correct Answer in Noun Phrase of Descriptive text

4.1.7 Thinking Verb

There were six verbal thinking questions. The graph below depicts the percentage of correct answers given by students. 10 students can correctly answer all questions, 3 students can correctly answer four questions, 2 students can correctly answer three questions, 10 students can correctly answer two questions, 4 students can correctly answer one question, and 1 student cannot correctly answer all questions.

Table 4.7
Graphic of Students' Correct Answer in Thinking Verb of Descriptive text
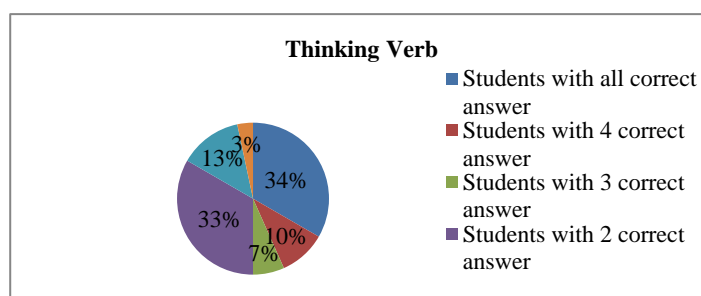
The data above showed that the most known or familiar language feature is simple present tense. Related to Kurniawan (2015), the objective of the research is to describe descriptive text written by students. He is focusing to analyze the generic structure and one of the descriptive text language features, which is a simple present tense. The result showed most of the students were able to apply simple present tense in writing descriptive text. The study investigated descriptive text in students' writing skills. Whereas in this research, the researcher was to investigate the students' comprehending of language features in descriptive text. Reading skill was used in this research. The similarity between both is the text type which is descriptive text. In Kurniawan, most students were able to apply the present tense in descriptive text. According to Jaya (2008: 14), there are seven language features in descriptive text. The result above shows that most students already understand all of the language features such as the first component is a specific noun, according to the Meriam Webster dictionary, a noun is a class of words that typically can be combined with determiners. From the result, it can be seen most students can answer the questions well, which means the students

understand well about the specific noun in descriptive text. The second is adjectives, according to Meriam Webster adjective is a word belonging to one of the major form classes in any of numerous languages and typically serving as a modifier. Many students could answer the questions well, which means the students already understood adjectives. One adjective characteristic is usually coming right before a noun. According to the oxford dictionary, an adjective is a word that describes a person or thing. This can support the student to recognize the proper answer easily.

The third is the linking verb, it is used to connect information or to show a relationship in a sentence. From the result, it can be seen that many students already understand, because mostly they can answer four questions correctly. Fourth is the action verb, action verbs are verbs that specifically describe what the subject of the sentence is doing. These types of verbs carry a great deal of information in a sentence and serve to make the sentence complete. From the result, most of the students understood this component. The fifth is present tense, from the result it is seen that it has the highest percentage of all correct answers. Most students already master this component. The sixth is a noun phrase, a noun phrase that has a noun or pronoun as its head or performs the same grammatical function as a phrase. Noun phrases often function as verb subjects and objects, as predicate expressions, and as complements of the preposition. From the result, 30% of students can answer all questions correctly and 36% of students can answer 4 questions correctly. It means many students comprehend this component. Seventh or the last is thinking verb, thinking verb is to express a personal writer's view about the subject. From the result, it can be seen 34% of students can answer all questions correctly. It also means students comprehend the component.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research findings in the previous chapter, the researcher concludes that the student's ability to comprehend language features in the descriptive text of each language features of this research. First, specific noun there were 34% students can answer all questions, adjective material 47% students can answer all questions, 13% students can answer all questions, action verb 23% students can answer all questions, present tense 62% students can answer all questions, noun phrase 30% students can answer all questions, and thinking verb 34% students can answer all questions correctly. In conclusion, simple present tense and adjective have the highest percentage, which means most of the students already comprehend those language features in descriptive text.

SUGGESTIONS
1. For the students
Some students may already understand the language features of descriptive text, but some students still correctly answer only a few questions. It will be better if all language features in the descriptive text are known and learned.
2. For other researchers
The researcher realizes that the design of this study is very simple. Therefore, the result of this research can be used as a preliminary study to the other researchers to conduct further research about the students' ability in comprehending language features in descriptive text.

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