Language Pattern Analysis of Narrative Written Text of Junior High School Students in Malang

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Abstrak

Studi ini menyelidiki teks naratif tertulis siswa kelas sembilan di SMP negeri di Malang, dengan fokus pada pola bahasa mereka. Diharapkan dengan melakukan hal itu, guru bahasa Inggris akan menyadari bahwa pengajaran bahasa asing, khususnya bahasa Inggris, tidak dapat dipisahkan dari budayanya. Dengan menganalisis tulisan siswa melalui pendekatan kualitatif dan rubrik berdasarkan studi sebelumnya, studi ini mengungkap bahwa sebagian besar siswa, terlepas dari kewarganegaraan Indonesia mereka, secara dominan mencerminkan pola bahasa Inggris dalam narasi mereka. Hal ini menunjukkan pengaruh signifikan dari konvensi penulisan bahasa Inggris pada konstruksi narasi mereka, dengan siswa menghubungkan ide-ide dengan jembatan minimal, yang kontras dengan gagasan bahwa siswa Asia cenderung menggunakan pola bahasa oriental.

Kata Kunci: teks tulis naratif, pendekatan kualitatif, siswa SMP di Kota Malang

Abstract

This study investigates the narrative written texts of ninth graders at a public junior high school in Malang, focusing on their language patterns. It is hoped that by doing so, English teachers will be aware that teaching a foreign language, especially English, cannot be separated from its culture. Analyzing students' writing through a qualitative approach and a rubric based on previous studies, the study reveals that most students, despite their Indonesian nationality, predominantly reflect English language patterns in their narratives. This suggests a significant influence of English writing conventions on their narrative construction, with students connecting ideas with minimal bridging, which contrasts the notion that Asian students are likely to utilize oriental language patterns.

Keywords: language patterns, qualitative approach, junior high school in Malang

INTRODUCTION

English has been considered as one of the international languages that is critical for someone to expand themselves out of the country's border. Those opportunity has been wide open since the internet was investigated in the early 1990s and it becomes wider nowadays as the development of technology, especially in communication technology. With the technology advancement, people can interact with other people from different parts of the world. Thus, it also opens a new opportunity called "Free Market", where people all over the world can trade or make a business freely. With that opportunity, people from Indonesia can gain some fortunes by collaborating with the international communities from the different part of the planet. Therefore, it is essential everyone to learn English.

Knowing this opportunity, Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology created a curriculum that is named Kurikulum Merdeka which is designed to prepare students for the future where collaboration, innovation, creativity, and international competition are roaring loudly. One of the subjects that is regulated in the curriculum is English. According to the guideline from Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, English is taught to make the students able to use it not only on a paper test, but also in a real situation outside the classroom (Kemendikbud Ristek 2022). There are six skills that are required by the students to be learnt: listening, reading, writing, speaking, viewing, analyzing, and presenting (Kemendikbud Ristek 2022). By understanding the requirements set by the government, it can be concluded that their emphasize is on the practical use of English instead of the theoretical one.

In the curriculum, there are six phases for different education levels. Phases A – C are directed to the elementary schools, Phase D is directed to junior high school students, and Phase E – F is directed to senior high school students. In this study, the emphasize is on the phase D, which is directed to junior high school students. According to Rod Ellis, on his book "Second Language Acquisition", it is mentioned that the critical period, which is a range of time when people can easily learn the second language in a point where the learners can achieve the native level, that is when they are teenagers (Ellis 1997).

Teaching English to Indonesian students presents distinct challenges due to cultural and linguistic differences between Bahasa Indonesia and English. Each language has its own grammatical rules, vocabulary, and sentence structures, shaped by its respective cultural logic (Kaplan 1966). Research by Prasetyo, Saehu, and Sundari (2022) highlights that Indonesian students often encounter difficulties with writing due to interlanguage issues, which complicate the task of teaching both linguistic forms and the underlying logic of English. These challenges are exacerbated by the differences in how each language structures and conveys meaning, making it essential for educators to address these issues to enhance students' writing skills effectively.

However, teaching English to Indonesian students comes with its difficulty. Bahasa Indonesia and English come from different culture. Thus, adjusting the "rules" from both languages' aspects, one of them is grammar, will be quiet challenging According to Kaplan (1966), this challenge is caused by the violation of the native reader expectation that is made by the second language learners. The violation itself comes from the different rhetoric and sequence of thought which are the result of a culture. This statement is reinforced by the brief paper from Paul Lorenzen in Kaplan (1966) stated the influence of sequence thought to the language pattern which can be discovered to the writing product produced by the second-language learners. Additionally, Kaplan provided a comparison between two writing products written by Korean and English native speaker, which shows a contrast difference between the English language pattern compared to the oriental language pattern which is a part of the Asian culture - including Korea and Indonesia. English language pattern is linear while the oriental language pattern is circling, which is influenced by the culture that prefers the indirection to express something.

Based on the stated background studies, the research intended to prove that there is a culture difference, which is affected the way of the students' thinking. It is hoped that by doing this study, the readers can understand the language pattern difference so that there will be a better teaching method to Indonesian students. Additionally, it is hoped that teachers can understand the role of intercultural language in an English class better.

To get a better understanding about this study, we have to understand the basic of writing. Writing transcends the mere act of transcribing thoughts; it is a dynamic cognitive process intricately shaped by the unique thinking patterns of the writer (Muray 2003). Building upon Muray's insights, the writing process resists a linear trajectory; instead, it unfolds as a recursive journey that entails revisiting and repeating steps. Thinking, drafting, and revising may have been undergone by a writer while

writing a writing product (Brown and Lee 2015). Furthermore, those processes are deeply entwined with the writer's individuality, cognitive processes, life experiences, and the specific demands of the writing task at hand. Consequently, if a group of writers were given the same directive, the resulting compositions would exhibit similarities, yet each would be a unique expression influenced by the diverse interplay of individual characteristics within the dynamic process of writing.

Therefore, since writing is a complex process that involves back and forth steps, some experts equalize writing skills as difficult as swimming. To be able to swim, the has to be a place where someone can swim such as pool, lake, or any place where water is available on a large scale. To be able to write, someone has to be surrounded by a literate society, where people can teach how to write (Brown and Lee 2015). Therefore, writing can be classified as a difficult skill in language mastery. For someone who write in a second language, the challenge can be even harder because there are some points that need to be considered while writing in a second language, which are composing, process and product, intercultural rhetoric, differences between L1 and L2 writing, authenticity, content- and genre-based writing and pedagogy, form-focused feedback, and identity and voice.

Brown & Lee (2015) have put forth a comprehensive set of nine principles aimed at addressing the complexities inherent in teaching writing. The first one is exposing students to the good examples of writing products. Secondly, process and its result should be accounted to encourage students following the proper guide. Next, acknowledging someone's culture background should be done to shape the "originality" or the writer. Fourthly, encouraging students to read more for expanding their writing inspiration should be practiced. Additionally, the reading sources should be as authentic as possible. After absorbing as many information as possible, students should be directed to create a writing outline which consists designing pre-writing, drafting, and revising. During the process, students should be encouraged to actively participate in the learning process. Therefore, teacher, in this scenario, should act as a facilitator rather than a judge or a lecturer. Then, teachers should explain rhetorical and formal conventions of writing, which provide students with a clear understanding of these conventions that enables them to navigate the intricacies of different writing styles and genres, empowering them to communicate effectively in various contexts.

To increase the learning effectiveness further, evaluating writing products should be practiced. In order to that, proper feedback should be addressed correctly by the teachers to their students (Brown and Lee 2015). However, to increase the objectivity of the evaluation,

there is a list of six categories of writing: content which focuses on the substance and information within writing, organization which refers to the arrangement of ideas, discourse which refers to the way a writer communicates with the readers, syntax which refers how writer writes sentences in the writing product, vocabulary which refers to the word of choice, and mechanics which refers to the punctuation (Brown and Lee 2015).

Though teachers have considered all the mentioned writing process, cultural logic should not be left out alone. In fact, this aspect is significant to the Indonesian students who study English as their foreign language. The challenge faced by them mostly comes from the grammatical aspect (Nurkholijah and Hafizh 2020). This might happen because Bahasa Indonesia has different grammatical aspects, namely the non-existence of tenses. For instance, an Indonesian who wants to say "I eat today" and "I ate yesterday" will say "*Saya makan hari ini*" and "*Saya makan kemarin*". The only difference from the Indonesian is on the adverb of time – unlike the English one which changes the word "eat" to "ate". By this evidence, it can be concluded that cultural logic plays a significant rule to the learning process of a language.

To provide further evidences of the effects of cultural background to the students' writing pattern, narrative text is chosen to be the mean to do that task. The logic behind this is that text need to be written by a writer who has adopted a specific thought process shaped by cultural logic. Take, for instance, the well-known story "Cinderella," which unfolds the tale of a compassionate girl mistreated by her stepmother and stepsisters. Her life undergoes a transformative journey after encountering a magical being, the fairy godmother. Endowed with an enchanted gown and shoes, she captures the prince's attention, leading to their eventual marriage. Similarly, in Indonesia, a comparable narrative known as "Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih" (Garlic and Onion) exists. This story centers around a virtuous girl mistreated by her stepmother and stepsister. Her life takes a turn when she encounters a miraculous being, an old lady who is, indeed, a disguised fairy. Rather than receiving a magical gown and shoes, the girl completes tasks assigned by the old lady and is rewarded with a small pumpkin filled with gold and pearls. Interestingly, the step-sister and stepmother, envious of Bawang Putih, attempt the same tasks but receive a large pumpkin filled with snakes and dangerous insects. While these stories share similarities, they present distinct characters and settings influenced by cultural nuances, playing a pivotal role in shaping one's thought process (Kaplan 1966). Thus, by understanding the background of this study, a research question is formulated, which is "How do the ninth graders' language discourse in their writing product?"

METHODS

In this particular study, a qualitative descriptive method was adopted to explore and understand the various types students' language discourse in their written texts. In this study, unravelling the intricacies of language discourse in student writing was the main goal. This approach was meticulously selected due to the nature of the data essential for addressing our research questions, which revolves around the behavioral dynamics of students during English writing sessions. The complexity of such behaviors renders numerical measurement inadequate for capturing the depth and nuances inherent in their actions.

Qualitative research emerged as the most suitable avenue as it allows for a nuanced exploration and interpretation of phenomena that transcend mere quantification. By eschewing numerical metrics in favor of qualitative analysis, a comprehensive understanding of students' language discourse and patterns as evidenced through their writing outputs could be comprehended using descriptions.

In this study, one of the classes in the 9th grade from a junior high school in Malang was chosen to be the subject. The specific selection of this school was based on the diverse learning achievements of its students. Additionally, this junior high school was located at the outskirt of the of Malang, thus making it quite unpopular among its people. Students of that junior high school were mostly consisted of the local suburban area who could not afford to go to school outside the local area. Yet, there was a significant learning achievement's diversity. This diversity encompasses a range of academic performances, with some students achieving highly, others maintaining average performance, and some exhibiting lower academic achievements. This diversity can be found in all of the classes in the ninth grade. Thus, the usage of random sampling by choosing one of the classes is used to enhance the validity of the data collected through observations (Creswell 2014).

The rationale behind this selection was to obtain a comprehensive and representative understanding of language discourse in writing by considering the experiences of students across different proficiency levels. By including students with diverse academic achievements, the research seeks to identify patterns and variations in the writing products. This approach acknowledges the inherent differences in student abilities and provides insights into how linguistic challenges may manifest across various learning achievement levels.

The incorporation of high-achieving, average-performing, and struggling students contributed to a holistic perspective on the research topic. Examining a diverse group allows for the identification of language

discourse written by students with varying learning achievements (Creswell 2014). Furthermore, studying a range of proficiency levels enhanced the external validity of the research, making the findings more applicable and generalizable to different educational contexts.

In summary, the deliberate choice of a class with diverse learning achievements not only enriched the research data but also facilitated a comprehensive exploration of strategies or interventions that can effectively address the language discourse possessed by the students.

To systematically investigate the language discourse of junior high school students' narrative writing, collaboration with an English teacher was initiated to design a narrative text writing assignment aligned with the curriculum. The assignment instruction was as followed:

"Write a creative narrative writing text consist of at least 3 paragraphs. You can choose any theme that you like freely. Please submit the assignment next week."

This collaboration is needed to ensure the result of the study can be as accurate as possible. After the assignment was completed, the researcher collected the writing product to be analysed further.

After collecting the data, analysis was conducted by employing a rubric based on Brown and Lee (2015) that includes six aspects of writing assessment Brown and Lee (2015) and the language pattern written by Kaplan (1966). Those aspects are content, organization, discourse, syntax, mechanics, and vocabulary. These aspects were also utilized by the previous studies. One of them was done by Laba and Dewi (2023), which conducted a study about the connection between applied linguistic and language discourse analysis in English language teaching. To increase the objectivity of the analysis, numeric score was employed to define the performance of the students in writing the stories.

To collect data for this study, students were directed by the teacher to choose a writing topic based on their preferences and create a draft. Following this, students were instructed to compose a narrative text based on their drafts, adhering to a constraint of at least three paragraphs. The final step involved students submitting their writing product, allowing the aspects present in their writing to be identified using the rubric mentioned in the previous sub-chapter. After all writing products have been identified, the results were summarized into one conclusion that reflects the students' language discourse

To analyze the data from the research, a set of data analysis process done by Braun and Clarke (2006) were utilized in this study. There were six steps of data analysis that were used in order to analyze the data.

The first step was to learn and familiarize the gathered data. In this step, taking notes and marking ideas were critical steps in order to analyze a certain part of the data. In this study, those parts were the 6 points of writing and the language pattern. Moreover, each of the students' writing products were marked by naming them "Doc. X". This action was taken so that readers could comprehend the data analysis by understanding which writing product the data referred to.

The second step was generating initial codes for the data analysis. Code is an interesting point of the data that can assessed in a meaningful way (Braun and Clarke 2006). In this case, the points from data that had been initially marked were grouped into certain categories, which were content, organization, discourse, syntax, mechanics, vocabulary, and language pattern. By coding the products, the data would be better analyzed and provided an objective analysis.

The third step was searching the themes. This third step was taken to prevent the overlapping codes that might alter the analysis. To search the themes, codes that have been collected would be sorted and grouped based on the 6 points of writing cited from Brown and Lee (2015) and the language pattern from (Kaplan 1966).

The fourth step was reviewing themes. This step was taken to look for pattern that might occur in the third step. In this study, the majority of the writing products had similar results – only a handful of writing products that had different on a or some points from the others.

The fifth step was defining and naming the themes. This step was taken to refine the analyzed theme. Thus, it would be a great help on moving to the next step, which was writing the report.

The sixth step was writing the report. This step was taken to publish the result of the study to the readers, thus giving a better and clearer understanding to the study. In this case, the report was written on the next chapter. Narrative report was used to undermine the results of this study, for it was better to describe the results clearer and better to comprehend.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of student writing submissions showcases a predominant coherence between chosen titles and narrative content, with 15 out of 16 submissions aligning effectively. This consistency is pivotal for engaging storytelling, ensuring readers' expectations are met and enhancing their immersion in the narrative world. This finding is also in line with one of the writing criteria proposed by Brown and Lee (2015). Based on their proposal, the content aspect can be evaluated by determining whether the writer is able to provide relevant narrative topic with the content. Therefore, based on this point, most of the students are able to create a properly connected title and narrative content. However, they

struggle with coherently linking the various parts of the narrative, especially the orientation and complication.

Moreover, the study reveals that most students effectively composed their stories, showcasing a strong ability to seamlessly integrate different parts, which maintains a clear and logical progression that captivates readers. This skillful weaving of narrative elements ensures that the plot flows smoothly, making it easier for readers to follow and stay engaged with the story. The ability to create such coherence demonstrates the students' understanding of narrative structure and their aptitude for storytelling, which is also in line with Brown and Lee's writing evaluation aspects.

Another thing revealed in this study is that while students effectively use cause-and-effect relationships to structure their narratives, enhancing both coherence and engagement, there is a notable need to address issues related to pronoun consistency. The use of cause-and-effect patterns allows students to logically link events and actions, creating a narrative flow that is easy for readers to follow and understand. This method of structuring their stories demonstrates a strong grasp of narrative mechanics, as it helps to maintain reader interest and ensures a cohesive storyline. The use of cause-and-effect relationship is also commonly taught by the English teacher, for it is the foundation of English language pattern proposed by Kaplan (1966).

As for the tone itself, most students convey positive messages. This positivity messages can indicate the students' background as it is explained by Hyland, Paltridge, and Wong (2021), which are hopeful with the problems that they encounter. As for the negative message conveyed by 4 students, they might have or had a struggle with the problem that is similar to the main characters, such as failing in fishing, unable getting a new smartphone, or having a bad experience while camping. However, there is a possibility that the students are trying to get creative by creating a bad ending to the stories, which is quite unusual compared to the good ending which is commonly used in narrative stories.

As for the writing style, repetition plays a crucial role in reinforcing central themes and engaging readers. In one of the examined narratives, the repeated use of the word "basketball" serves to underscore the primary focus of the story and emphasize the protagonist's passion for the sport. This deliberate repetition not only enhances understanding of the protagonist's dedication but also immerses the reader more deeply in the narrative world, establishing basketball as a dominant motive. Though, there are some possibilities that the repetition usage is done to cover the students' lack of vocabulary which occurred in the studies from Nurkholijah and Hafizh (2020) and Hartono and Maharani (2020).

As for the students' punctuation, the analysis of student writing submissions reveals significant challenges in punctuation mechanics, impacting the clarity and readability of their narratives. One prevalent issue observed across most stories is the misplacement of commas, particularly within direct speech. This misplacement disrupts the reading flow and violates standard punctuation rules. Additionally, students commonly misplace periods and commas, often using commas instead of periods to indicate the end of a sentence. This practice leads to confusion and hinders text readability. This punctuation misuse is in line with the study from Rahmawati (2023). On her paper, she mentioned Indonesian students are already familiar with the theory of writing. However, they hardly implemented the theory into practice. Additionally, students may directly transfer their oral communication style to their writing, neglecting the mechanical aspects that regulate the communication flow, which are typically controlled by voice and tone (Brown and Lee 2015).

In analysing the vocabulary usage within student narratives, a predominant adherence to the simple past tense emerges, aligning with the conventional narrative style. However, inconsistencies in tense usage surface in 2 out of 16 stories where the simple present tense is intermingled with the simple past tense. This mixing of tenses disrupts the narrative flow, posing challenges for readers in following the storyline seamlessly. This challenge faced by students in this study is in line with the theory proposed by Brown and Lee (2015). Writing in a second language (L2) presents challenges due to differences in language nuances, syntax, and idiomatic expressions, necessitating that writers adeptly manage these distinctions in multilingual settings. In this case, students are confused with the gender-based pronoun, which is not common in *Bahasa Indonesia*. Therefore, adapting to a new language's aspect is a tough task faced by the Indonesian students who are familiar with the unisex pronoun.

In examining student narratives, it becomes evident that there's a tendency for students to lean towards English language patterns over Oriental language patterns. The English pattern can be observed through the cause-and-effect flow that shifting through one idea to another directly or with a minimum transition.

This finding negates the theory from Kaplan (1966), which on his paper, he proposed that the students from Asia tend to use Oriental language pattern, which is using an indirect pattern that shift one idea to another with a lot of bridging or transition. The English language pattern may be caused by the narrative text examples given to the students. According to Brown and Lee (2015), to make a writer writes better, the person should be exposed

with various examples of writing products, which are written in English language pattern. By giving more examples, the students, in this case, will eventually follow the example and reflect what they observed into their own narrative text. After all, it is the nature of young learners to follow examples that are demonstrated by their teacher (Scott and Ytreberg 1990).

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that it is discovered that the junior high school students in Malang have a decent performance in writing narrative text. They are able to write a comprehensive story that align with their story well, use a proper grammatical tense, and connect one idea to another. However, they often create some mistakes on the mechanic aspect of writing such as the usage of coma, period, and capital letters.

Additionally, it is discovered that students tend to use English pattern rather than the Oriental pattern. They connect one idea to another with minimal bridging. Thus, it can be concluded that despite the students' nationality, which is Indonesian, they write in using English pattern instead of Oriental pattern.

These findings suggest that while junior high school students in Malang demonstrate a strong grasp of narrative structure and the use of direct cause-and-effect relationships, reflecting their proficiency with English language patterns, there is a pressing need for targeted instruction in pronoun consistency and punctuation accuracy. By focusing on these areas, educators can help students improve the clarity and readability of their narratives. This balanced approach to language instruction can enhance students' overall writing skills, ensuring that their storytelling is not only structurally sound but also grammatically precise, thereby better preparing them for advanced language use in future academic and professional contexts.

The results of this study are based solely on the students' writing product. Therefore, some information regarding to the reason why students tend to make mistakes on mechanic aspects or why students mostly use English language pattern instead of Oriental language pattern, which is the common pattern used by the Asian students, including the Indonesians. Thus, it will be more beneficial if the future study includes interview as one of the research instruments. By understanding the reason, future researchers can understand the students' writing behaviour, which can improve the accuracy of the study results.

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