An Analysis of Student's Descriptive Text Writing in Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) Perspectives

Sihab Lapoto Ade Potradinata

Abstract—**Many kinds of texts are presented to the high school students in Indonesia. There are many kinds of texts that they have to master. One of the text should be mastered by the students is descriptive text. Based on a student's descriptive text at one of Islamic senior high school in Semarang Regency, the student still have difficulties in writing a descriptive text. To overcome that problem, this research aims to analyze a student's descriptive text writing through SFL perspectives and to find out the pedagogical implication to deal with that problems. This research belongs to qualitative descriptive in which using the document analysis as a technique to obtain the data. The finding showed that students still have difficulties in some aspects such as the difficulty in writing the descriptive text with a chronological schematic structure, the inability in adjusting the social function of the text, and the difficulty in filling the text with appropriate language features such as the use of unspecific participant. Thus, according to several studies as the pedagogical implication, Discovery Learning Model can be implemented to solve students' problem in writing descriptive text.**

Index Terms—**Descriptive text, discovery learning, Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) perspectives.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of language skills in English that should be mastered by students in Indonesia, especially in senior high school students. Senior high school students actually are demanded to be able to write a text because they have been taught how to write a text in their school. There are several types of text being taught in the school such as narrative text, descriptive text, hortatory, recount text, and so on. However, in this research, the writer used descriptive text. Descriptive text is the simple text of writing, it uses simple present tense which has been learned by the students when they were in elementary school. In descriptive text, students have to describe something or someone. Although it is a simple text the students still have difficulties in writing descriptive text because when students write a text, they have to consider many things such as grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, and cohesion among sentences and paragraphs. Therefore, it is the responsibility of teachers to make their students master how to write a text properly. Teachers need to have knowledge of SFL as the basis for teaching descriptive text, teachers should also be equipped with the capability of delivering it in the process of teaching and learning.

In the reality, teachers faced the problems related to teaching writing especially teaching descriptive text, such as using the appropriate technique in delivering writing text section, teachers may lack time allocation, and teachers found difficulties in involving teaching grammar as well as teaching vocabulary in teaching writing descriptive text. Moreover, teachers sometimes cannot focus on giving right corrective feedback on students' text. Teachers cannot decide whether will give correction to all errors only focus on the important ones that very influence to students' text.

Several studies have been conducted to find out the ability and difficulty of students in writing descriptive using Systemic Functional Linguistics. One of them is Siahaan, he conducted a study about the ability and difficulty of tenth graders in writing descriptive text. He found that the middle and high achievers were able to organize descriptive text with suitable schematic structures and language features. On the other hand, students who are categorized as low achievers still met difficulty in identifying schematic structure and language feature of the descriptive text.

Regarding those problems, it is very important to investigate the student's descriptive text related to a Systemic Functional Linguistic framework and its pedagogical implications to teaching-learning process to improve students' writing skill in descriptive text. Therefore, the study tries to seek answers to the following statements of problems:

1. How is student's descriptive text writing in Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) Perspectives?

2. What is the pedagogical implication that can be conducted in teaching descriptive text?

A. Descriptive Text

Descriptive is a written English text in which the writer describes an object. In this text, the object can be a concrete or abstract object [1]. Descriptive text is a text containing two components *i.e., identification and description*. The identification is to identify the object to describe while the description is to describe parts, qualities, and characteristics of the parts of the object. The social function of descriptive to describe a particular person, place or thing [2].

Keraf [3] mentions in descriptive writing, the writer transfers the images, the feeling that writer experienced to the reader. The writer tries to convey the image, feeling, and experience to readers in order to readers can imagine or as if, they are also engaged in it. However, students make the clear description in order to make the reader can imagine the object that is described such as students describe their school.

Kane [4] stated that descriptive text is description about sensory experience- how something looks, sound, and tastes. Mostly it is about visual experience, but the description also

deals with other kinds of perception. The purpose of the descriptive text is to describe and reveal a particular person, place, or thing in details or specific to make the reader be able to visualize the description. It can be concluded that descriptive text is used to describe everything, which is seen by a writer in detail.

B. Systemic Functional Linguistics

Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is a theory of language which focuses on the idea of language functions rather than only on form. This term was introduced by the work of Halliday [5] which does not only refer to the theory of language but also a methodology for analyzing the texts based on the context they are used. The theory explains how the language works to serve particular functions and its representation within the texts. As a language is socially constructed, SFL aims to explain how individuals use language and how language is structured for its different usages [6]. Hence, multifunctional views of language are needed to meet certain social function.

An individual can express various ways of language to show his or her intended meaning for they serve a specific function. The multifunctional views in expressing the meaning give us a set of choices to accomplish the functional meanings. Meanings in SFL perspective can be realized into three types covering 'ideational or experiential', 'interpersonal', and 'textual' meanings which they are known as metafunctions[6]. These three metafunctions are embodied in the expression of functional language in certain social context. Ideational meaning involves experiential properties of language or representation of the real worlds. Meanwhile, the Interpersonal meaning deals with the social interaction between speaker and listener. Lastly, textual meaning signifies what makes language into a text. They are simultaneously creating the meaning together. Investigating ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings of the text allows us to understand the dynamic relationship between the meanings the writer wants to convey, the grammatical structures used, and the context of situation framing it which includes ideologies, periods, and movements of the writers.

C. The Three Metafunctions in Descriptive Text

According to Thompson [7], utterances and sentences could be analyzed through interpersonal metafunction, experiential metafunction, and textual metafunction. Interpersonal metafunction is a language which used to interact with other people. Secondly, experiential metafunction which use language to talk about the world. The last is textual metafunction which language that organizes to fit in its context. For interpersonal metafunction relates to the fact that the clause is interrogative but functions as a kind of command, that it expresses the writer's assessment of probabilities and her attitude, and that it explicitly signals the writer's negotiation with the reader. The speaker makes a statement to give information or asks a question to demand it, and the exchange is successful if the listener gets the information that the speaker gives or provides the information demanded through language. Describing orders things in various ways of knowing them. The ordering process works in several ways; first, it generally names thing, then it classifies it, and then it deals with its attribute, behaviors, functions and so on.

1) Interpersonal metafunction

Thre are two major terms in analyzing a descriptive text based on interpersonal metafunction. They are a type of mood and speech function. There are three types of mood; declarative, interrogative, and imperative. The most widely-used mood in a descriptive text is a declarative mood. For example, *he swims in the swimming pool.* The finite is *swim* which usually in the form of present tense. An adjunct is usually in the form of an adverbial group for example; usually, always, seldom, etc. Speech function is a statement which functions to give information and question which functions to ask/demand information. For example, *the prince is very handsome.*

2) Experiential metafunction

Experiential metafunction focuses on analyzing the main verb of the clause. There is three fundamental constituents which make a clause: participants, processes, and circumstances. Participants are usually formed in noun groups and a sentence might have more than one participant. Processes can represent verbal groups. Then, circumstances are typically realized by adverbial groups or prepositional phrases. the process of actions which involves the role of participants namely transitivity. Transitivity can discover the linguistic features of a certain text since the participant, process, and circumstance time and place can be investigated by using the transitivity[6]. In this case, the transitivity system is used to uncover the linguistic features of the descriptive texts. Meanwhile, the structure of the texts was analyzed based on the schematic structures of the descriptive texts as suggested [8] and [9]. The research is expected to increase and enrich students' knowledge in writing so that they can write English well.

In transitivity system, there are six process types [6]. The first is a material process. It can be defined as a process of doing something [10]. It usually uses action verbs. For example, *Andi drinks water.* Second, Mental processes are ones of sensing [5]. There are three types of sensing in mental processes, they are *affective* (feeling), *cognitive* (thinking), and *perceptive* (perceiving through the five senses) [2]. The example: *I like chocolate.* Third, verbal processes are processes of saying or symbolically signaling [2]. According to Halliday[5], there are four participants in verbal processes, they are *Sayer, Receiver, Verbiage, and Target.* For Example, *I* (sayer) *explain my presentation to my friends* (receiver), *My cat* (sayer) *caught the mouse* (Target), Relational Attributive: *She* (Carrier) *is a Cinderella.* Relational Identifying: *His name* (Token) *is Andi.* Fifth, *Behavioural processes* are processes of psychological behavior. The main participant is called behaver, and it must be a conscious being [6]. *A camel* (Behaver) *lives (*Behavioral) *in the desert* (Circumstance*).* Sixth, *Existential processes* are "processes of existence". There is only one participant in existential processes, it is existent [5]. For example, *there are so many birds.*

3) Textual metafunction

The textual metafunction investigates how the sequenced clause arranged by the speaker to present coherent or unity part of messages. In textual metafunction, there are *Theme and* Rheme. The theme is the first constituent of the clause, while the rest is labeled the Rheme. In descriptive text, the

theme is in the form of a declarative theme. For example; *An ant has three body parts*. The other themes are thematic equative and experiential theme. For example of thematic equative is that *he enjoys the beach*. The example of the experiential theme is that *he feels happy.*

D. Previous Research

In regard to the related studies conducted about the similar issues, there are three relevant types of research reviewed. The first research was conducted by Siahaan [1]. This study investigated the ability and difficulty of tenth graders in writing a descriptive text. He found that the middle and high achievers were able to organize descriptive text with suitable schematic structures and language features. On the other hand, students who are categorized as low achievers still met difficulty in identifying schematic structure and language feature of the descriptive text.

The second studies have been conducted by Sipayung, et al [11]. They studied about the realization of metafunction on students' descriptive paragraphs. The research found that students employed relational, material, mental, and existential in experiential metafunction. Meanwhile, in interpersonal metafunction students' text examined declarative, imperative, modality, and personal pronoun. Students also have conveyed textual meaning by expressing Theme and Rheme development

It is different with the previous studies, conducted by Anggun [12]. She conducted a study in relation to descriptive text analysis of English textbook using transitivity systems
(a case study of reading passages).

Her study focused on one of three metafunction that is experiential to analyze descriptive text in English textbook used for grade x of senior high school. The result showed that there was unsatisfactory descriptive text found in an English textbook.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

The design of this study was a descriptive qualitative; particularly a document analysis because this study is intended to figure out how student's descriptive text writing is in SFL perspectives. It is used to gain some evidence concerning a descriptive text through analyzing the student's text [13].

B. Data Collection

1) Research subject

The researcher used a purposive sampling in choosing the research subject. The researcher analyzed a descriptive text written by a student at the second grade of a private Islamic high school in Semarang-Central Java.

2) Instrumentation

The instrumentation used in this study is a student's text chosen as a document analysis. The text is a descriptive text written by a student at the second grade of a private Islamic high school in Semarang-Central Java.

3) Procedure

The steps to collect the data are as follows:

a. The researcher determined a text which is written by the students.

b. The researcher asked a help to a teacher to ask the students to write a descriptive text as an assignment.

c. The researcher chose one text out of twelve texts given by the teacher.

d. The researcher analyzed the student's text to see the match with theories of descriptive text in the context of social function, schematic structures, and language features from SFL perspectives

e. Researcher design a pedagogical implication which is used to effectively help the student overcome the recurring problem found in writing a descriptive text .

C. Data Analysis

The data collected from this study were analyzed about student's writing in the form of its' common grammatical mistakes, its schematic structures and communicative purpose, and its three metafunctions.

III. FINDINGS

This part aims at analyzing the data in order to answer two research questions, as follows.

1. How is student's descriptive text writing in SFL Perspective?

2. What is the pedagogical implication that can be conducted in teaching a descriptive text?

In the present study, one descriptive text written by the second grade of a private Islamic high school was selected as the object of the study. The researcher analyzed student's writing in the form of its' common grammatical errors, its schematic structures and communicative purpose, and its three metafunctions.

A. Grammatical Errors

In writing a descriptive text, the student should understand the grammar in order to convey the ideas clearly. The discussion about grammatical problems will cover the error types that were frequently found in the text like incorrect sentence structure, incorrect word order, incorrect formation or use of passive, unclear message, incorrect subject-verb agreement. The incorrect or missing article, and the problem with singular or plural of a noun.

The student has grammatical errors in writing a descriptive text such as *errors in subject-verb agreement, missing articles,* and *problems with singular or plural forms of a noun*. From the text, the student still had problems with grammatical rules, namely; errors in subject-verb agreement, for example in the sentence *"students learns some lessons"*. The subject does not fit with grammatically with the verb. The verb is incorrect. The verb should be in a plural form. It should be *"Students learn some lesson"*. Additionally, the student still had problems with grammatical rules, namely; missing article. The evidence is shown in the sentence *"Acceptance is the student registration."* she did not use article " an" when she put a countable noun. The sentence should be" *An acceptance is the student registration"*. In addition, the student had problems with the singular and or plural of a noun. It is shown from the text: " *there are 3 kind of process"*. The sentence should be" *there are 3 kinds of*

process". Therefore, it can be concluded that the student had problems with grammar.

B. Schematic Structures and Social Purpose

As previously mentioned, the study focused on the generic or schematic structures of the text or how the text elements are organized. The findings showed that this text talked *school* in general than talking about specific school as seen from several sentences at the beginning of the text: *"School is a place where we study"*. The clause is continued with: *"School consists of three components, students, teachers, and building"*. Moreover, the school description cannot be found in the second paragraph in which the writer still talked about what school is used for. Even in the last paragraph, the writer discussed the process conducted in school as seen in this sentences: *"To conduct those kinds of process, school is helped by administrative staff "*.

Therefore, it is quite difficult to say that the text has already met the criteria of a descriptive text in the form of social purpose. To be a descriptive text, the text should describe a place specifically. For instance, *describe her school library*, or *a national library* which makes the participant specific.

1) Interpretation of the schematic structures

The findings above indicating that student of the study still not completely understanding the ideal descriptive text. The schematic structures of a descriptive text should have a general statement and description of it. For example, at the first paragraph, the student wrote the general statement of the school by explaining what school is, and what the components and function of a school. In the second paragraph, the student told about the activities done in a school. Then, the last paragraph is about the assistance in conducting activities in a school.

This implies that the student has problems in paragraphing a descriptive text. The student tried to describe the school in general in the first paragraph which, in some parts, leads it to be a reports text which has a function to describe the way things are with reference to a range of natural, man-made and social phenomena in our environment [2].

C. Language Features from SFL Perspectives

1) Interpersonal metafunction

Interpersonal metafunction relates to analyzing the relationship between participants involved within or through the text. This text used *a school* as the main subject. It appears to be a disparity with the characteristic of a descriptive text in which the participant should be in a specific one, such *as my school, my mother, or my cat*. It is very difficult to say that this text is a descriptive text, but this text is a report text.

To portray how interpersonal metafunction is realized in the student's text, the lexicogrammatical features of the texts are analyzed to be then interpreted into their contextual description. This interpersonal meaning is realized in the lexicogrammatical choices in the system of Mood taken by the student by using Declarative Mood in the form of all positive polarity. The student considered the purpose of a descriptive text in which to give information to the readers. Moreover, all of the clauses was also written in present tense

with is as the Finite.

2) Experiential metafunction

Language is used by people to convey the meaning. Mostly, people only focus on the content of the message rather than the purpose for which the speakers have uttered. In the interpersonal meaning, it enables the language users to give them a full value in the overall meaning of the clause. On the other hand, experiential perspective "comprises a set of resources for referring to entities in the world and the ways in which those entities act on or relate to each other"[7].

Transitivity probably distinguishes between the verbs that have an object or not. Verbs in here have broader sense. It refers to a system for describing the whole clause, rather than just the verb and its object. It shares the traditional values that focus on the verbal group. The verbal group determines the participant's label [7]. It can be concluded that transitivity system is simply "the study of what people are depicted as doing and refers broadly, *to who goes to whom, and how*" [14]**.** Transitivity will reveal who plays an important role in a particular clause and who receives the consequences of the action [9].

From the Transitivity system of Experiential metafunction in which the text is realized through the process of actions which involves the role of participants [15]. It can be summarized that student's clauses were structured by material process with 8 clauses, attribute process with 4 clauses, relational process with 3 clauses, and one clauses for mental, existence, and behavioral process (see Appendix).

The material process takes dominant part of the clauses involved in the text describing the action done by the participant. For instance*, students learns some lessons*, *the staff manages the time from beginning to the end of the year, etc.* While the use of attribute process, she had realized that she should describe and explain functions of the participant to make the readers understand the topic she chose when writing a descriptive text although the carrier or the token which she used is not in the form of specific participant. For instance, *school* (carrier) *is a place where we study*, *acceptance* (carrier*) is the student registration*. To sum up, this text describes the function of school by using attribute process and gives an additional description by using material process.

3) Textual metafunction

According to Thompson (2004) [7], textual metafunction deals with examining aspects which can only be understood by looking at the clauses in its context in the rest of the language around it. From this textual metafunction perspective, the current study tries to see how the writer constructs her messages in a way which makes them fits properly into the unfolding language events. The speaker or writer constantly organize the way her message is worded in order to signal to them how the present part of their message fits in other parts. In line with the statement, Butt, et.al [15] state that the present meaning correlates to the ways the text is delivered whether spoken or written, monolog or dialogue and their grammatical patterns. This textual meaning combines the signs of a mode of discourse. The analysis of the areas will lead to appropriate meaning created in the text

or conversely.

From the sample of the text, it was found that majority of themes in the text are in the form unmarked topical theme, and the writer also properly used marked textual theme by using conjunction and conjunctive to link ideas in old information to the new ideas in new information that in turn makes this text is well readable. For instance, *And the building is a place for studying divided into some classroom.* The unity of the sentence is not appropriate, for instance: *school consists of three components, students, teachers, and building*. The student should separate the sentence into two parts. The first part is that *school consists of three components*, and the second part is that *the components of the school which is students, teachers, and building*.

IV. DISCUSSION

Implications for teaching English concluded from the study is formulated to cope with the problems found in student's descriptive text. In analyzing student's text through SFL perspective, it was found that the student faced many problems in the inability in adjusting the social function of the text, difficulty in writing the descriptive text with a chronological schematic structure, and the difficulty in filling the text with appropriate language features. Accordingly, the results of the study trigger EFL teaching, especially teaching writing in a descriptive text to put more emphasis on giving further explanation about the aspects aforementioned.

Therefore, those problems could be solved by using discovery learning because of this model focus on an active and hands-on learning activities for students [16]. According to Burner [17], discovery learning model is a model to improve the way of the active students'learning by discovering and investigating themselves, so the result that will get is permanent and memorable in their mind, it is unforgettable to students. By using discovery learning, students can also think analysis and try to solve their problem by themselves. In addition, discovery learning is one of learning model proposed by the government to use in teaching learning process in 2013 Curriculum because students construct knowledge based on new information and data collected by them in an explorative learning environment [18]. In short, this discovery learning can be one of a solution to solve students' problems in writing descriptive text.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the problems of student's descriptive text occurred in inability in adjusting the social function of the text, difficulty in writing the descriptive text with a chronological schematic structures, and the difficulty in filling the text with appropriate language features such as the use of inappropriate specific participant and inappropriate tense.

Therefore, As EFL teachers, it is necessary to have a good knowledge about systemic functional linguistics (SFL) because it is part of the English language and may bring a great change to EFL teaching and learning and the EFL

teachers have to conduct a good teaching activities when they teach descriptive text in order to solve those problems. To solve that problem, the researcher proposed *discovery learning model* to be used in teaching descriptive text in the classroom. Besides being one of teaching models proposed in 2013 curriculum, discovery learning is believed to be suitable for the 21st-century teaching paradigm in which the students are encouraged to be the autonomous learner. Regarding the conclusions above, it is recommended that further study could be done involving large number of the participants and could be used with some interviews.

APPENDIX

The student's text
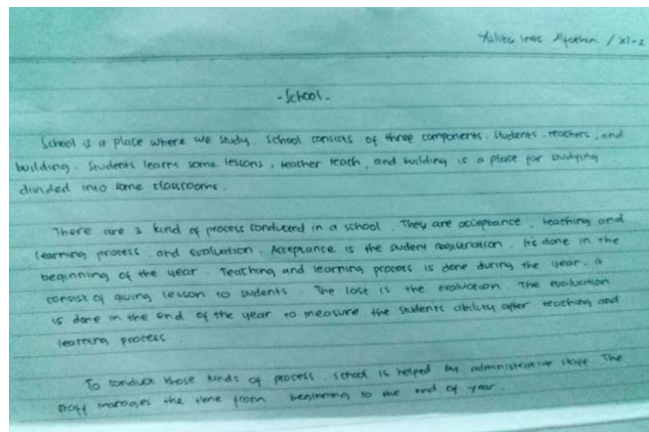
SFG ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

Clause 1: School is a place

School	is	a place
Subject	finite	Complement
Mood		Residue
Carrier	Attribute Process	Attribute
Topical: Unmarked Theme	Rheme	

Clause 2: Where we study

Where	we	Study
Adjunct	subject	Finite+predicator
	Mood	
	Actor	Material
Textual: Marked Theme	Rheme	

Clause 3: School consists of three components, students, teachers, and building

School	consists of	three components, *students, teachers, and building*
Subject	finite	Complement
Mood		Residue
Sensor	Mental process	Phenomenon
Topical: Unmarked Theme	Rheme	

Clause 4: Students learns some lessons

Students	learns	some lesson
Subject	finite	Complement
Mood		Residue
Actor	Material process	Goal
Topical: Unmarked Theme	Rheme	

Clause 5: Teacher teach

Teacher		Teach
Subject		Finite
Mood		
Actor		Material process
Topical: Unmarked Theme		Rheme

Clause 6: And building is a place for studying divided into some classroom

And	builiding	is	a place for studying divided into some classroom
Adjunct	Subject	finite	complement
	Mood		Residue
	Carrier	Attribute process	Attribute
Textual: Marked Theme	Rheme		

Clause 7: There are 3 kind of process conducted in a school

There	are	3 kind of process conducted in a school
Subject	finite	existence
Mood		Residue
Token	Existense	Existensial
Textual: Unmarked Theme	Rheme	

Clause 8: They are acceptance, teaching, and learning process, and evaluation

They	are	Acceptance, teaching, and learning process and evaluation
Subject	finite	Complement
Mood		Residue
Carrier	Attribute process	Attribute
Topical: Unmarked Theme	Rheme	

Clause 9: Acceptance is the student registration

Acceptance	Is	The student registration

Subject	finite	Complemet
Mood		Residue
Carrier	Attribute Process	Attribute
Topical: Unmarked Theme	Rheme	

Clause 10: It's done in the beginning of the year

It	Is	done	In the beginning of the year
Subject	Finite	predicator	Complement
Mood		Residue	
Behaver	Behavioral process	Circumstance	
Topical: unmarked theme	Rheme		

Clause 11: Teaching and learning process is done during the year.

Teaching and learning process	is	done	During the year
Subject	finite	predicator	Complement
Mood		Residue	
Goal	Material process	Circumstance	
Topical: Unmarked theme	Rheme		

Clause 12: It consist of giving lesson to students

It	Consist of	giving lesson	to student
Subject	Finite+ predicator	Adjunct: circumstance	Adjunct: circumstance
Token	Relational process, identifying	Value	Circumstance
Topical: Unmarked Theme	Rheme		

Clause 13: The last is the evaluation.

The last	Is	The evaluation
Subject	finite	complement
Mood		residue
Token	Relational process, identifying	Value
Topical: Unmarked theme	Rheme	

Clause 14: The evaluation is done in the end of the year

The evaluation	Is	done	In the end of the year
Subject	finite	predicator	Complement
Mood		Residue	
Goal	Material process	circumstance	
Topical: Unmarked theme	Rheme		

Clause 15: to measure the student's ability after teaching and learning

To measure	The student's ability	After teaching and learning process
Ellips: subject	Predicator	Complement
Material process	goal	Circumstance
Textual: marked theme	Rheme	

Clause 16: To conduct those kinds of process, school is helped by administrative staff

To conduct	Those kind of process	School	is helped	By administrative staff
		subject	Finite	Predicator
		mood		Residue
		goal	Material process	Benefeciary
		Topical: Unmarked theme	Rheme	

Clause 17: The staff manages the time from beginning to the end of the year

The staff	manages	The time	From beginning	To the end of the year
Subject	Finite+ predicator	Complement	Adjunct	Adjunct
Mood		Residue		
Actor	Material process	Goal	Circumstance	Circumstance
Topical: unmarked theme	Rheme			

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