

Analyzing the Eleventh-Year-Students' Descriptive Writing Skills Documented in the Academic Year of 2017-2018

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ABSTRACT

*This research aims at analyzing students' descriptive writing skills that engage the academic performance among the eleventh-year-students in the academic year of 2017-2018. This research applied for the quantitative method and involved 60 students of the eleventh year students of Islamic state high school (Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1) Klaten as the respondents. Data collection used the students' descriptive writing test. Data were statistically analyzed the SPSS program to gain the descriptive analyses. The finding showed that the overall achievement of students' organization component was in the average level with 73.3% respondents, mechanics component was in the average level with 66.7% respondents, evidence component was in the average category with 46.7% respondents, and sentence structure component was in the average level with 55% respondents. The lowest score gained in descriptive writing was sentence structure ($M = 2.533$; $SD = .700$) and the highest score was on organization component ($M = 2.733$; $SD = .446$). This research concludes that students' descriptive writing skills laid on the **average** category.*

Keywords: Descriptive study, Model of Character Based-Learning, Writing.

Introduction

Writing is a developmental and flexible process. Using a prescribed process for acts of writing during instruction does not take into account individual differences between writers and generates writing instruction that is narrow, rigid, and inflexible (Sharp, 2016). On the other side, writing is one of the indispensable things in studying English. It is one of the language skills that the students have to learn in their learning process (Huy, 2015). Togatorop (2005) states that writing is known as one of the most important but difficult academic skills. It usually takes so much time for the students to master competently and tends to be a boring lesson. Writing is learned, not taught, and the teachers' role is to be non-directive and facilitating, providing writers with the space to make their own meanings through an encouraging, positive, and collaborative environment with minimal interference Hyland, 2002). Teacher's roles are expected to motivate students' academic increase, proneness, and broad-mindedness (Sumekto, 2018) toward the collaborative-based efforts promoting and engaging both teacher and students (McAfee, 2015; Sumekto, Saleh, Retmono, & Sofwan, 2015). The efforts consequently and flexibly deal with students' individual-based performance (Sumekto, 2014a) to enhance their independent problem-solving capability (Sumekto, 2014b), and to use of language skills (Sumekto, 2017). So, writing is the most important and difficult academic skill in English that is developmental and flexible with the cooperative environment and minimal interference.

Based on the preliminary observation, the students got difficulties in writing, they produced some mistakes in vocabulary, so they could not write with correct grammar in English. The students used unsuitable words to write English. The students did not apply the English sentence structure correctly, they explained that they could write in Indonesian, instead of writing in English. Anyway, the Islamic State High School (*Madrasah Aliyah Negeri*) 1

Klaten use the 2013 curriculum in the eleventh grade. It is required that all students shall be independent to get their material by using the available learning media or facilities. In writing process, they usually still wrote in Indonesian, and then they translated into English on the internet by using Google translate with the incorrect results, such as grammatically incorrect, inappropriate translation setting, and improper vocabulary. The research question relied on, "How the descriptive writing skills of the eleventh-year-students of Islamic State High School (*Madrasah Aliyah Negeri*) 1 Klaten in the academic year of 2017/2018 is?" This research aims at analyzing students' descriptive writing skills that engage the cognitive performance among the eleventh-year-students of Islamic State High School (*Madrasah Aliyah Negeri*) 1 Klaten in the academic year of 2017/2018.

Review of Related Literature

Review of related literature is a frame of reference for data analysis in the research stages. It is intended to find out the theoretical framework related to students' descriptive writing and the teaching and learning writing.

Writing Literature

Writing has always formed part of the syllabus in the teaching of English. However, it can be used for a variety of purposes, ranging from being merely a 'backup' for grammar teaching to a major syllabus strand in its own right, where mastering the ability to write effectively is seen as the key objective for students (Harmer, 2004). Richard and Renandya (2002; Fauziati, 2010), writing is the most difficult skill to master for foreign language learners. Fareed, Ashraf, and Bilal (2016) state that writing is an important skill for language production. According to Harsyaf, Nurmaini, and Zakhwan (2009) writing is transforming thoughts into language. it means that we need to think about the content of our writing first and then arrange the ideas using appropriate language, such as grammar and vocabulary. When someone will write in English, they should use English vocabulary and the English structure sentence. Meanwhile, Surastina and Dedi (2017), writing is the most complex and important language skill because it permanently records information, opinions, beliefs, feelings, arguments, explanations, theories, and emotions. Writing is a developmental and flexible process, using a prescribed process for acts of writing during instruction does not take into account individual differences of writers and generates writing instruction that is narrow, rigid, and inflexible (Sharp, 2016).

Writing Function

According to Onchera and Manyasi (2013), functional writing skills provide an individual with the essential knowledge, skills and understanding that enables one to operate confidently effectively and independently in school, life and at work. Individuals of whatever age who possess these skills are able to participate and progress in education, training, and employment as well as develop and secure the broader range of aptitudes, attitudes, and behaviors that enable them to make a positive contribution to the school, community in which they live in and places of work. Writing skills are important to learners who need them in their everyday communications in school and even after school. When writing skills are needed in everyday communications be it in school or after school, they take an instrumental or a functional role and are therefore referred to as functional writing skills. Meanwhile, Harmer (2004) states that there are some the function of writing, namely: writing is often not time-

bound in the way conversation; writing encourages students to focus on accurate language use; writing has always been used as a means of reinforcing language that has been taught; writing is frequently used in preparation for some other activities; writing can be used as an integral part of a larger activity where the focus is on something else such as language practice, acting out, or speaking, it is also used in questionnaire type activities, and to help students perform the different kind of activities (in this case speaking and listening). Students need to be able to write to do these activities.

Teaching and Learning Writing

The process of teaching writing, according to Seow (2002), the process of writing as a classroom activity incorporates the four basic writing stages-planning (pre-writing), drafting (writing), revising (redrafting) and editing.

1. Planning (pre-writing)

Pre-writing is an activity in the classroom that encourages students to write. It stimulates thoughts for getting started.

2. Drafting (writing)

At the drafting stage, the writing is focused on the fluency of writing and is not preoccupied with grammatical accuracy or the neatness of the draft.

3. Revising (redrafting)

Revising is not merely checking for language errors. It is done to improve the global content and the organization of ideas so that the writers intend is made clearer to the reader.

4. Editing

Students are engaged in tidying up their texts as they prepare the final draft for evaluation by the teacher. They edit their peer work for grammar, spelling, punctuation, diction, sentence, structure and accuracy of supportive textual material such as quotation, example and like.

Nation (2009:) adds four principles teaching writing, namely: meaning-focused input, meaning focused output, language focused learning, and fluency development. Meanwhile, according to Nunan (2003), there is four principles for teaching writing. They are as follows:

1. Understand your students' reason for writing

The greatest dissatisfaction with writing, instruction comes when the teacher's goals do not match the student's, or when student's goal do not match those of the school or institution in which the student work. It is important to understand both and convey goals to students in ways that make sense to them.

2. Provide many opportunities for students to write

Practice writing should provide students with different types of writing well. The short response to reading, journal entries, letter writing, some poetry, or any type of writing.

3. Make feedback helpful and meaningful

Students save feedback on their writing, it does not always have intended effect. If a teacher writes comments on student's paper, make sure to understand the vocabulary or symbols you use.

4. Clarify for yourself, and for your students, how their writing will be evaluated

Students often feel that the evaluation of their writing is completely subjective. One way to combat that feeling is to first develop a statement for the writing teachers about what is valued in student's writings.

Bayat (2014) points out that writing process accomplish planning, translating, and reviewing stages. According to Whitaker (2009), the following writing process has worked for millions of students are choosing a topic, think (brainstorm), research, discover your thesis, plan (outline), write, revise, edit, and proofread. This research composes the stages of the

writing process are planning, drafting, revising, and editing. Accordingly, this literature review attempts to accomplish the descriptive paragraph the students need to work with. The definition of descriptive paragraph, according to Laila (2013) portrays the image of a certain thing from which a writer wants to transfer it to readers. Students use descriptions to say something or somebody looks like to the reader. A description is a picture painted with words. The descriptive paragraph can describe persons, other animals, plants, places, thought or feelings. Next, its generic structure includes identification that usually begins with a topic sentence and description that describes parts, qualities, and characteristics of the phenomenon to be described. Table 1 shows the example of descriptive text. The title is “*Rafflesia Arnoldy*” (Siahaan & Shinoda, 2008)

Table 1. The Example of Descriptive Text

Example	Generic Structure
Rafflesia Arnoldy	Title
Rafflesia Arnoldy is one of the rare plants in Indonesia, it can be found only in Bengkulu, one of Indonesia’s provinces. It is an almost extinct plant that should be conversed.	Identification
It is tremendous and high. It can be four meters in height. This plant grows up in the wild areas such as in the jungle. It cannot be planted by a human since it grows naturally. It has a wide and large leaf. The leaves can be three meters in long. It usually patterned and colorful. The most color is marron and it contains white spot to make it interesting to look at. The mid part is the trunk. This part is the highest part. It can be two or three meters high. This part grows up in the sky since this plant grows up following the sunlight. Actually, it can not be called as “trunk” since it the leaf that has a form like a trunk. It is harder than the other leaves and it is only one without branches. When we approach it, it has a bad smell. The smell is carrion-like. It spreads up to ten meters surround. The bad smell functions to protect itself from any disturbance such as animal, insect, etc.	Description

Then, the language features, according Mursyid (2011) corresponds with the focus on specific participants (e.g.: My English teacher, Aron’s cat, my favorite mountain); use of simple present tense; verb of being and having ‘Relational Process’ (e.g.: My father is really cool, Virna has long black hair); use descriptive adjective (e.g.: Strong legs, white fangs) – Use of detailed noun phrase to give information about the subject (e.g.: A very beautiful scenery, a sweet young baby, very thick fur); use of action verbs ‘Material Processes’ (e.g.: It eats grass, It runs fast); use adverbial to give additional information about behavior (e.g.: Fast, a tree house); and use of figurative language (e.g.: John is as white as chalk).

Research Methods

This research design conveyed the descriptive quantitative research, which intended to analyze the substantial issues relating to students’ descriptive writing skills. The research setting was held at a State-owned government of senior high school of the eleventh year students of Islamic state high school (*Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1*) Klaten, Indonesia. This research

involved 60 students as the respondents. The descriptive writing components relied on the organization, mechanics, evidence, and sentence structure (Hirai, Borrego, Garza, & Kloock, 2010). Data collection primarily used students' descriptive writing test with totaling 60 students when being involved in this research. This research used the interval data by interpreting into a score of 5-point Likert scale that ranged from 5 to 1. The equivalent score was 5 = excellent, 4 = good; 3 = average, 2 = poor, and 1 = failed.

This research firstly determined Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient to standardize the criteria. Cronbach's Alpha (α) was .705, whilst the score among the fourth variables ranged in between .647 to .792 with the sample size of 40 students. It accordingly interpreted that the value of Alpha (α) reliability coefficient was $>.60$ to be reliable (Sumekto, 2017). These scores corresponded with the variable of organization (.792), content (.647), mechanic (.685), and mechanics (.776). This research found that students' writing skill test on the descriptive study was $M=10.60$; $SD=1.70$ on the scale ranging from 5 to 1. Data analysis used the quantitative method to extract the descriptive analysis. The descriptive analysis specified mean (M) and standard deviation (SD).

Results and Discussions

The number of writing components used in the scoring rubric corresponded with the organization, mechanics, evidence, and sentence structure. The score achieved would be converted with a Likert scoring system (5 to 1 = Excellent; 4 = Good; 3 = Average; 2 = Poor; and 1 = Fail). The number of character-based learning used in this analysis relied on the honesty, sense of care, communication, and collaboration. First of all, data analysis of organization component described the following frequencies and descriptive statistics results: 16 students (26.7%) indicated their organization skill with the poor category, 44 students (73.3%) showed their organization skill was in average category (Shown in Table 2). Meanwhile, there was no student achieving their organization of writing skill in the excellent category. The result also recorded that the lowest score of organization component gained 2 and the highest score was 3 through the Likert's scale category. The students' mean was 2.73 and the standard deviation was .446 with $n=60$. The overall achievement of organization component showed **average** category with 73.3%.

Table 2. Students' Organization Component

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 2	16	26.7	26.7	26.7
3	44	73.3	73.3	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

As summarized in Table 2, the score distribution on organization component was graphically interpreted by applying for the histogram (Figure 1), as follows:

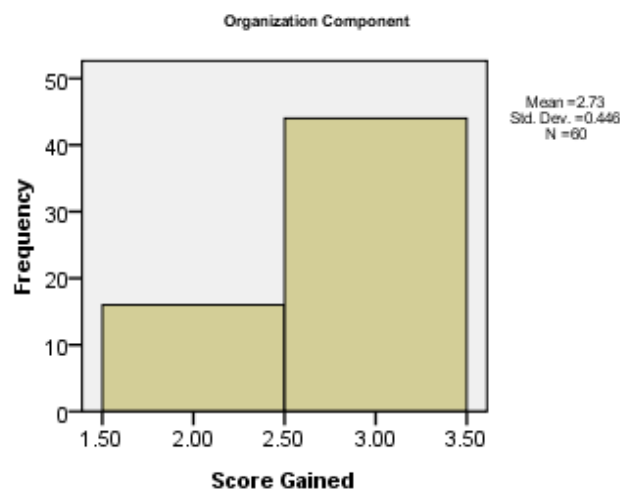


Figure 1. Students' Orgaization Achievement

Second, data analysis of mechanics component described the frequencies and descriptive statistics results through Table 3 and Figure 2 in the following: 1 students (1.7%) indicated their mechanics skill with the fail category, 19 students (31.7%) indicated their mechanics skill with the poor category, and 40 students (66.7%) showed their mechanics skill was in average category. Meanwhile, there was no student achieving their mechanics of writing skill in the fail, good, and excellent category. The finding also recorded that the lowest score of mechanic component gained 1 and the highest score was 3 through the Likert's scale category. Students' mean was 2.65 and the standard deviation was .515 with $n=60$. The overall achievement of mechanics component showed **average** category with 66.7%.

Table 3. Students' Mechanic Component

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	1	1.7	1.7	1.7
2	19	31.7	31.7	33.3
3	40	66.7	66.7	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

As summarized in Table 3, the score distribution on mechanics component was graphically interpreted by applying for the histogram (Figure 2), as follows:

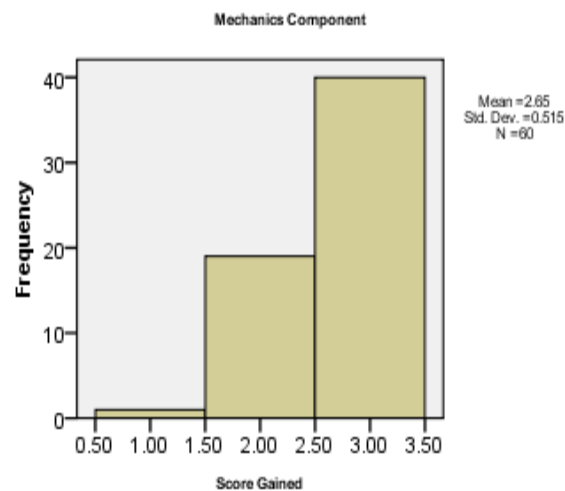


Figure 2. Students' Mechanics Achievement

Third, data analysis of evidence component described the frequencies and descriptive statistics results through Table 4 and Figure 3 in the following: 1 student (1.7%) performed their evidence skill with the fail category, 24 students (40%) indicated their evidence skill with the poor category, 28 students (46.7%) showed their evidence skill was in average category, and 7 students (11.7%) showed their evidence skill was in the good category. Meanwhile, there was no student achieving their evidence of writing skill in the excellent category. The finding also recorded that the lowest score of evidence component gained 1 and the highest score was 4 through the Likert's scale category. Students' mean was 2.68 and the standard deviation was .701 with $n=60$. The overall achievement of evidence component showed **average** category with 46.7%.

Table 4. Students' Evidence Component

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	1	1.7	1.7	1.7
2	24	40.0	40.0	41.7
3	28	46.7	46.7	88.3
4	7	11.7	11.7	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

As summarized in Table 4, the score distribution on evidence component was graphically interpreted by applying for the histogram (Figure 3), as follows:

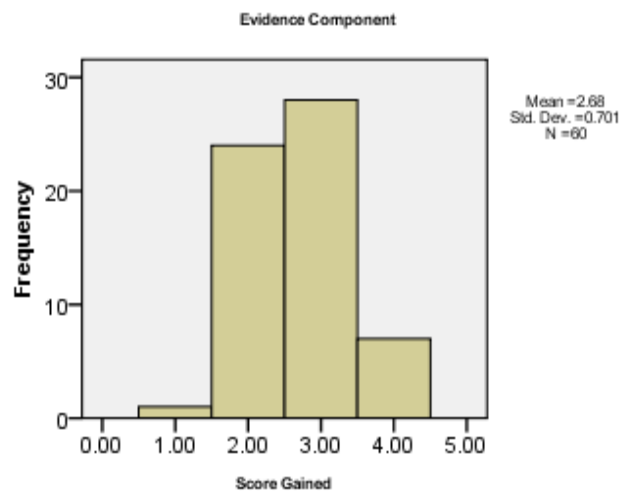


Figure 3. Students' Evidence Achievement

The last but not least, data analysis of sentence structure component described the frequencies and descriptive statistics results through Table 5 and Figure 4 in the following: 5 students (8.3%) performed their sentence structure skill with the fail category, 20 students (33.3%) indicated their sentence structure skill with the poor category, 33 students (55%) showed their sentence structure skill was in average category, and 2 students (3.3%) showed their sentence structure skill was in the good category. Meanwhile, there was no student achieving their sentence structure of writing skill in the excellent category. The finding also recorded that the lowest score of sentence structure component gained and the highest score was 4 through the Likert's scale category. Students' mean was 2.53 and the standard deviation was .70 with $n=60$. The overall achievement of sentence structure component showed average category with 55%.

Table 5. Students' Sentence Structure Component

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	5	8.3	8.3	8.3
2	20	33.3	33.3	41.7
3	33	55.0	55.0	96.7
4	2	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

As summarized in Table 5, the score distribution on sentence structure component was graphically interpreted by applying for the histogram (Figure 4), as follows:

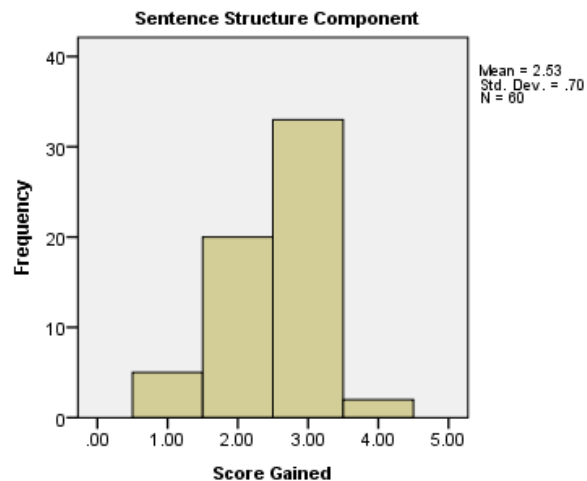


Figure 4. Students' Sentence Structure Achievement

Furthermore, students' writing skills addressed to the contributing component of conventions, organization, mechanics, evidence, and sentence structure. Sixty senior high school of the eleventh year students of Islamic state high school (*Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1*) Klaten participated in writing class. The results of students' writing as shown in Table 6 were categorically gained in the following components: organization ($M = 2.73$; $SD = .4459$), mechanics ($M = 2.65$; $SD = .515$), evidence ($M = 2.68$; $SD = .701$), and sentence structure ($M = 2.53$; $SD = .700$). The analytic scoring rubrics were set in a 4-point-Likert scale to figure out students' writing performance. Further, the statistics for organization's skewness (-1.083) and kurtosis (-.858), mechanics' skewness (-1.026) and kurtosis (-.118), evidence's skewness (.226) and kurtosis (-.470), and sentence structure's skewness (-.582) and kurtosis (-.032) were inconsiderable for sixty examinees' writing. From the results of skewness and kurtosis in students' writing components, the data were normally distributed. The lowest mean gained in the essay component was sentence structure (2.533) and the highest mean was organization (2.733).

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Writing Achievement

Writing Component	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness		Kurtosis	
						Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Organization	60	2.00	3.00	2.7333	.44595	-1.083	.309	-.858	.608
Mechanics	60	1.00	3.00	2.6500	.51503	-1.026	.309	-.118	.608
Evidence	60	1.00	4.00	2.6833	.70089	.226	.309	-.470	.608
Sentence Structure	60	1.00	4.00	2.5333	.70028	-.582	.309	-.032	.608
Valid N (listwise)	60								

Moreover, one-sample t-test was conducted to investigate students' writing achievement scores which involved conventions, organization, mechanics, evidence, and sentence structure components as shown in Table 7 and Table 8. Based on the results of t-test analysis, there was no significant difference in scores for organization ($M = 2.73$, $SD = .446$; $t = 47$, $p = .000$ (2-tailed) with 95% confidence interval ranging from 2.62 to 2.85; mechanics ($M = 2.65$, $SD = .515$; $t = 40$, $p = .000$ (2-tailed) with 95% confidence interval ranging from 2.52 to 2.78; evidence ($M = 2.68$, $SD = .701$; $t = 30$, $p = .000$ (2-tailed) with 95% confidence interval ranging from 2.50 to 2.86; and sentence structure ($M = 2.53$, $SD = .700$; $t = 28$, $p = .000$ (2-tailed) with 95% confidence interval ranging from 2.35 to 2.71).

Table 7. One Sample Statistics of Students' Writing

Writing Component	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean
Organization	60	2.7333	.44595	.05757
Mechanics	60	2.6500	.51503	.06649
Evidence	60	2.6833	.70089	.09048
Sentence Structure	60	2.5333	.70028	.09041

Table 8. T-Test for One-Sample Test

Writing Component	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Organization	47.477	59	.000	2.73333	2.6181	2.8485
Mechanics	39.856	59	.000	2.65000	2.5170	2.7830
Evidence	29.655	59	.000	2.68333	2.5023	2.8644
Sentence Structure	28.022	59	.000	2.53333	2.3524	2.7142

Conclusions

This conclusion attempts to answer the the research question, as follows: how is the achievement of the Eleventh-year-students' descriptive writing skills run in the academic year of 2017/2018. Substantially, there is no significant difference among organization, mechanics, evidence, and sentence structure toward the results of students' descriptive writing. The achievement of students' writing skills is categorized into the *average* level. Based on the overall results, the mean of students' organization is 2.73 with 73.3%; students' mechanics is 2.65 with 66.7%; students' evidence is 2.68 with 46.7%; and students' sentence structure is 2.53 with 55%.

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