LEARNING OBSTACLES IN DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to describe learning obstacles that arise when the English learning process on the material of describing people that related to descriptive writing skills. Basically learning obstacles are the common things that occurred during the instructional process where it becomes an indication that students are digesting materials which delivered. Those things can be overcome by designing the lesson plan that suits to the needs and character of students. This is a qualitative research by using a didactical design which can reveal the experiences of students in the real situation during the learning process. It can be seen from the research finding that there are several obstacles namely cognitive obstacles, genetic and psychological obstacles, didactical obstacles and also epistemological obstacles.

Keywords: *Learning obstacles, Descriptive writing, English Language, Didactical design*

INTRODUCTION

In the world of education especially in Indonesia, English is not something new but has become a fundamental requirement for every academic component. It has been introduced since elementary school or even in kindergarten. This is a proof that language skills, especially English, must be developed from an early age so that they will have enough ability to compete at a higher level through their language skills.

There are so many efforts made especially by parents that their children are skilled in English. For example buying their children a CD containing English songs or even send them to the English lessons (English Private Course) which is an additional learning process outside the school. It should be a concern for all of us, especially English teachers at school, to be able to bridge their needs for English.

In the class, English learning is one of the teachers' responsibilities, in which the teacher should be able to facilitate the student's need for the required knowledge. In addition, it is the task of a teacher also to pay attention to all aspects of learning activities to create quality teaching and learning process. Qualified teachers not only expect their students to achieve national academic standards determined by the government but are required to shape the characters and skills needed in the lives of their students. Therefore, learning English especially in the classroom should be well planned/prepared thus the implementation of it can be maximized and also can create the expected learning situation.

In the reality, the process of learning, especially in descriptive writing still found some obstacles that experienced by students. As Alawi (2011) explained that writing is the most difficult for second language learner. The difficulty lies not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in translating these ideas into readable text. Those come from both internal and external students which will

greatly affect the quality of learning that is implemented.

Learning obstacle is a natural thing experienced by students in the learning process. It indicates that the student is studying or trying to relate this concept to the new concepts. Among these obstacles, Maharani (2014) suggests in learning there are cognitive, genetic and psychological, didactic and epistemological obstacles which in accordance to Cornu (1991) where:

1. Cognitive Obstacle is a situation that occurs when students experience learning difficulties.
2. Genetic and psychological is a situation that occurs as a result of a student's personal development.
3. The didactical obstacle is an obstacle that occurs due to the learning process is undertaken by the teacher.
4. While Epistemological obstacles is an obstacle that occurs because of the concept of matter itself.

Meanwhile, Brosseou (2002) suggests several causes that cause learning barriers to be seen from the learning system (teachers, students, and knowledge). It is divided into three types of learning obstacles, namely epistemological obstacle, didactical and ontogenetic obstacle.

1. Epistemological Obstacle
   This type of obstacle occurs because the students' understanding of a concept is incomplete or, according to Suryadi (2010) it's caused by the knowledge of a person who is limited to a certain context. If the person is confronted with a different context then his or her possessions become unusable or he or she has difficulty using them.

2. Didactical Obstacle
   Maharani (2014) explained that this type of obstacles can be derived from the incorrect concept or conceptual teaching that is not in accordance with the students' readiness. Furthermore, this obstacle can also occur as a result of the error of the learning process that comes from the learning system in the school itself. Didactical obstacle mostly caused by the way teachers in creating and designing the curricula for learning.

3. Ontogenetic Obstacle
   Ontogenetic obstacle according to Tamba (2015) is a learning obstacle based on students' psychological factors where students have learning difficulties caused by mental readiness, in this case, the level of thinking students have not met may be due to the age factor. On the other hand, Maharani (2014) explained the cause of this type of resistance is due to the limitation of the concept of learning at the time of child development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative study which according to Moleong (2007) this type of research is intended to understand the phenomenon of what is experienced by subjects such as behavior, perception, motivation, action holistically, and described into the form of words and language. It is in accordance to Creswell (2010) which states that in the phenomenology of researchers trying to understand events and links to people who are in it. In this type of research data is analyzing through reducing, presenting, verifying and concluding data. This research used a didactical design approach to describe the students' experience such as learning obstacle and learning trajectories. The subjects of the study are students of Grade X Social 3 consisted of 32 students at 1 Cigugur State Senior High School.

DISCUSSION

Based on the result of respondent skill test (TKR) that is given to the 28 students of grade X social 3, it can be described as follows:
a. *Cognitive Obstacle*
Cognitive obstacles occur when students experience learning difficulties or in other words as proposed by Tague (2014) is a lack of prerequisite knowledge in the course of a material.

1. Lack of Vocabulary
   Lack of English vocabulary possessed by students become one of biggest obstacles in descriptive learning on the material describing people. This is caused by many factors, for example,

based on the interview results conducted to Student 8 (S8) obtained information that the student learns English only in the school while outside he had no intention to learn English language. The time allocated to deepen their English is still less thus it will impact on the quality of language acquired especially vocabulary whether in quantity of vocab or in the way they write that vocab as we can see in the following picture:
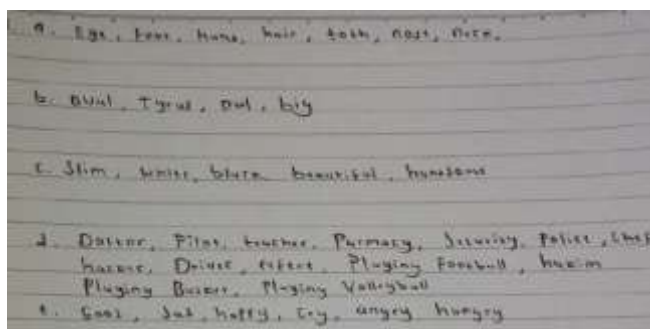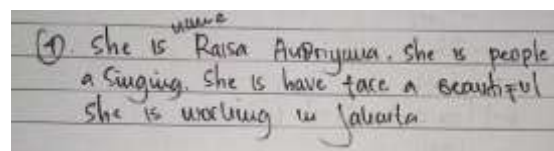

Picture 1
Students 8 worksheet

From the picture above, we can see how the quality of vocabulary owned by S8. It is not only about limited vocabulary, but also his understanding and the way he writes of the word was still not maximized. It can be seen from the word "toth", "refere", "hakim" which means the student knows those meaning but wrongly written.

In addition, a less desire to explore or adding the English vocabulary makes English seem to be a very difficult subject. This information is obtained from the information of English teachers in class XI which states that most students always struggle when they are introduced to the new vocabulary which ultimately makes the learning atmosphere less conducive.

2. *Lack of Ideas*

The idea is something important in writing where her/his idea they will be able to develop their desires into the text. According to Dewinta (2015) the core of a writing is in its idea. Thus, the students who has no idea will struggle to create a writing. Students' difficulties in developing ideas are visible from the descriptive paragraph made during the Respondent Skills Tests (TKR) in which

only a small percentage of students are able to complete their writing. Based on the interview result conducted to some students gained similar answers that they did not know what they have to write into their writing. It can be seen from the following picture:

Picture 2
Students' 7 worksheet

Based on the result above, we can see that student 7 is limited in pouring the idea into the text which is the idea is a basic of writing. According to the Respondents' Skill Test (TKR) only four students, S10, S17, S18 and S28 whose can be categorized as having ideas or has succeeded in putting their ideas into writing, the rest of them still have difficulty and even they cannot write one sentence related to the descriptive text. There are several ways that can be done to bring up ideas when students faced to a writing. For example by using mapping about what we will write. As expressed by Buzan (2013) that by using the mind mapping we can place information easily into the brain and also take it from the brain. Thus by introducing the concept of mind mapping, we can facilitate children to quickly find information about what we will write.

3. *Grammatical*

It is no different with the students' difficulties faced before, the grammatical aspect becomes one that must be addressed. Based on the questionnaire that spread, 28.57% of students stated that grammar is difficult, but in reality as TKR conducted almost all participants have difficulty in grammar. It can be seen in picture 2 where the written sentences are not arranged in good grammatical terms. For example, in the phrase "she is people is singing" It shows us how poor their grammar understanding. In other words, they do not realize or even do not

know the form of grammar that they must arrange in a writing.

b. Genetic and Psychological Obstacle

Genetic and psychological obstacles arise from students' development. Related to these obstacles, in this study obtained the following matters:

1) Lack of Confidence

Confidence in learning English is one factor that is very dominant, especially for second or foreign language learner which is not everyone can use it in their daily life. Based on interviews with some students obtained information that they are not confident either when saying or writing something related to English. Of course, it becomes one of the factors that cause English not well developed especially in the remote area. Inadequate knowledge of English in their time (golden age) plus their distrust of self-abilities have made them into the situation where English cannot be explored.

2) Friends and circumstances

Environment or friends is a real medium to explore language skills. Indeed, both of these are facilities that we can use to interact with each other. But the absence of a supportive environment or friends can hinder the development of the language they have. From the information gained, friends or the environment in which they grow and develop as individuals are less supportive in developing language skills. Even their friends seem to be "anti" to the English language. The impression of "show off" is more prominent among the people in the remote area than giving appreciation when someone speaks English. This may be because the community has not yet fully aware and understood the importance of English in technological life. It actually has impacted on the development of English which is owned by someone when both friend and circumstances are not supportive.

c. Didactical Obstacles

Didactic obstacles arise due to the treatment of teachers in the learning process. As we know the role of teachers in facilitating the needs of students is very important. Therefore, teachers are required not only to master the material but also they must find an appropriate approach to be implemented. From the interviews' results that conducted to both students and also a teacher, and analyzing the finding, didactical obstacles can be described as follows:

1) The use of inappropriate approach

Liza (2013) stated that the use of inappropriate approach in teaching descriptive writing will only make the student very hard to understand. Based on the interviews with students, inappropriate approaches that implemented by the teacher have affected the situation in the classroom so boring. Thus they are not really interested in the material given by the teacher. English is not a favored subject especially in grade X Social 3. Thus, the English teacher has to do the hard work to change or even to create learning process to be more interesting by using various methods or approach thus the students can enjoy the learning. However, when researchers clarify to the English teacher, it is found that the efforts made by the teacher have been very maximal including using the methods or interesting approach though. She further stated that the apathy to English subject has been there for too long, so it is very difficult to change that opinion. But she promised to keep digging and learning to find a solution to this problem.

2) Sources Book Oriented

When the researchers conducted interviews either to students or teachers about what learning resources used during learning obtained information that in the process the book that used is the one issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia. The use of another source is needed in broadening the knowledge of the students. So, teacher should not dependence onto one sources book which is single source of

learning will be bordering the knowledge that should be developed

3) Textual

Meaningful learning is learning where the material learned can be correlated with the daily life of the student. When students are involved to explore what they often meet around it will be easier for them to understand the knowledge presented.

d. Epistemological Obstacle

The epistemological obstacle is the students' obstacle in learning because of students' understanding of a concept, but its concept cannot be used on other issues. Based on the results of the analysis and description of the data, found some epistemological obstacles as follows:

1) To Be Misconception

Based on the answers given in TKR, still found students who think "I'm" is "me or I (saya in Indonesia)" which necessarily always can be used in any form of time. Grammatically "I'm" is a composite of "I" plus to be "am" so it becomes "I'm" which is can be applied in present form and when is past form, then to be "am" Will be "was". From the results of the dialogue with the student 10, it is stated that the concept of "I'm" is "saya" has been going on from junior high school. In addition, there are also students who have an understanding that "is" can be used by all subjects.

2) Have and has Misconception

Many students in Indonesia think that the word "have" is only used in possessing matter. In another hand, the word "have" can be a main auxiliary for the subject "I, You, We, They" in the present time. But based on the results of answers and also interviews with the students, there is still found the misconception of "have" and "has". As the results of an interview conducted during TKR, it found information as the dialogue below:

P: *coba translate kalimat ini "santi mempunyai sebuah novel"*

S16: *"santi have a novel" she stated*
P: *kok bisa pake have?*
S 16 : *kan have itu artinya mempunyai pak.*

From the dialogue above, the students' understanding about have and has still need to be explored. Thus they can distinguish when they can use have and has. Based on TKR (Respondent Skill Test) the majority of students have not mastered in "to be" and another main auxiliary verb yet which is they only know it partially. It means they only can use their understanding in particular form but struggle when they try to implement into another form.

CONCLUSION

Writing is all about how a person delivers his/her idea. However, based on the research conducted at Grade X Social 3 in Cigugur State Senior High School, the students still have several obstacles that can be classified into Cognitive, genetic and psychological, didactical and epistemological obstacles. Those issues have to be addressed by the English teacher. Thus their understanding of writing especially descriptive writing can be developed.

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