



**A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE SEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS'
WRITING ACHIEVEMENT AND THEIR DIFFICULTIES
IN DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPH AT SMPN 3 JEMBER**

THESIS

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JEMBER UNIVERSITY**

2015



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Presented as One of the Requirements to Obtain the S-1 Degree
at the English Education Program, Language and Arts Education Department,
Faculty of Teacher Training and Education,
Jember University

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2015

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DEDICATION

This thesis is honorably dedicated to:

My beloved parents, Saifuddin and Umi Halimah.



MOTTO

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step”

- Confucius



CONSULTANTS' APPROVAL

**A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE SEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS'
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IN DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPH AT SMPN 3 JEMBER**

THESIS

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Finally, I hope this thesis will be useful for the readers. Any criticism and suggestions for the improvement of this thesis will be fully appreciated.

Jember, November 2015

The writer

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SUMMARY

A Descriptive Study of The Seventh Grade Students' Writing Achievement and Their Difficulties in Descriptive Paragraph at SMPN 3 Jember; Nina Rahmawati, 080210401040; 2015; 122 pages; English Education Program of Language and Arts Education department, the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Jember University.

This research was a descriptive study about the seventh grade students' writing achievement and their difficulties in descriptive paragraph at SMPN 3 Jember in 2014/2015 academic year. It was designed to answer the research problem on the seventh grade students' writing achievement. This results from the fact that the result of the preliminary study in 2015 showed that the seventh grade students of SMPN 3 Jember experienced difficulties in their writing. Eventhough the average score was relatively good, they still experienced difficulties in writing descriptive paragraph related to mechanics, vocabulary and mostly grammar.

The students' writing achievement was classified into five aspects. They were mechanics, content, grammar, vocabulary and organization. The students' writing descriptive paragraph was assessed by using an analytical scoring rubric. All those scores were analyzed by using the percentage formula to get the students' percentage in writing descriptive paragraph. The percentage will be used to classify the students' ability in writing descriptive paragraph whether it was A, A-, B+, B, B- and so forth.

The result of the analyses of 31 students' writing scores in class 7B at SMPN 3 Jember it was found that 4 students or (13%) got A, 13 students or (42%) got A-, 7 students or (23%) got B+, 5 students or (16%) got B and 2 students or (6%) got B-. There were no students got below B-. It means that nearly half of the students got the score between 87,75 to 96 (3,51 – 3,84). Meanwhile, in the aspect of mechanics, 5 students or (3%) got A, 9 students or (6%) got A-, 7 students or (5%) got B+, 1

student or (0,6%) got B, 7 students or (5%) got B-, 1 student or (0,6%) got C+ and 1 student or (0,6%) got C. In the aspect of content, 24 students or (15%) got A, 6 students or (4%) got A- and 1 student or (0,6%) got below B+. In the aspect of grammar, 3 students or (2%) got A, 7 students or (5%) got A-, 9 students or (6%) got B+, 2 students or (1%) got B, 4 students or (3%) got B-, 3 students or (2%) got C+, 2 students or (1%) got C and 1 student or (0,6%) got D+. In the aspect of vocabulary, 9 students or (6%) got A, 6 students or (4%) got A-, 8 students or (5%) got B+, 3 students or (2%) got B, 1 student or (0,6%) got B-, 3 students or (2%) got C+ and only 1 student or (0,6%) got D+. The last, in the aspect of organization, 20 students or (13%) got A, 9 students or (6%) got A-, 1 Student or (0,6%) got B+ and 1 student or (0,6%) got B.

Based on those data, it can be concluded that the seventh grade students' writing achievement in descriptive paragraph at SMPN 3 Jember in the 2014/2015 was classified as "B+" category or 87,24. Meanwhile, the students difficulties mostly occurred in grammar, which was classified as "B" category with the average score 78,6.

I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents some issues related to the topic of the research. They are the background of the research, the problems of the research, the objectives of the research and the significance of the research.

1.1 The Background of the Research

Writing used to be a skill that was the exclusive domain of scribes and scholars in educational or religious institutions. Writing skill, at least at basic levels, is a necessary condition for achieving employment in many walks of life (Brown, 2004:218). From that statement, we can say that we are so lucky today because writing is not the exclusive domain for certain society anymore. Everyone should be grateful if he/she has the capability in writing.

Students learn about writing as one of four language skills. According to Ploeger (2000:xiii), writing is the way of communicating the discovery of what someone knows and the feeling about something to the readers. Through writing, one can express himself to the readers. If something new is discovered, someone can write it down with his own style and let the others know by reading it. A piece of good writing of what you feel can touch the reader's hearts. Besides, Chaffee, et al (1999:12) define writing as a language skill which focuses on how we put words together in conventional forms. In sum, writing means one of communication ways that deliver the writer's ideas and feelings about something to the people who read it. Besides, writing can be used as a tool to practice students' ability in expressing their ideas and feelings in written form by paying attention at the aspects of writing.

Writing ability is an important thing to master by students. Richards (1990:100) states that it is necessary for the students to have good writing ability because it can be useful for their academic success and a requirement for many occupations and professions. The statements mean that it is important for the students to master the aspects of good writing such as mechanics, content,

grammar, vocabulary and organization to achieve the success in academic life, which will be useful for their future career. In addition, Harmer (2007:32) confirms that writing is used as a tool to reinforce the language which has been taught. Further, he adds that the teacher can check the students' comprehension about the grammar which has been taught by asking them to write sentences based on that grammar. Furthermore, he states that writing can also become a mean to practice or research vocabulary. It means that through writing, the students can improve not only grammar but also vocabulary.

Students think that writing is a difficult language skill. According to Richards (1990:100-101), "writing is one of the most difficult tasks which a learner faces and only few people who can fully master that language skill". In addition, "writing is difficult to acquire because of the linguistic organization of written discourse and the complexity of the writing process". The process is complex because the writer should be able to move from concepts, thoughts, and ideas to written text. This idea is similar with Langan's idea (2003:13) who notes that "it is difficult for most people to do the intense and active thinking which can be used to produce a good writing". From those ideas, it can be concluded that writing skill is challenging in terms of organizing the ideas and expressing it into good content which is understood by the readers.

In the teaching learning process, students are expected to be able to write based on five aspects of writing, namely mechanics, content, grammar, vocabulary and organization. Langan (2003:13-14) states that the process of developing ideas and expressing them in written form is not an automatic process. Furthermore, Langan adds that the students will be able to write better if they practice writing more since writing is a skill. Similar to this idea, Ploeger (2000:xiii) points out that the students cannot learn to write without practicing it because writing needs concentration to make a draft and revise it. These statements mean that students need to practice a lot to master the writing skill.

Some information was gathered based on the interview with Mrs. IMD and NH, the seventh grade English teachers of SMPN 3 Jember in the preliminary

study on Tuesday, January 13th 2015. IMD was the English teacher of class 7A – 7F. Meanwhile, NH was the English teacher of class 7G – 7H. Based on the 2013 Curriculum, the seventh grade students of Junior High School are expected to be able to write descriptive paragraph. Generally, the teachers think that the students take longer time to do the writing tasks, but most of the students pass the minimum passing grade (80). The teachers teach English twice a week each class (each meeting lasts for 80 minutes) using Scientific Approach. Various media such as video (silent movie), pictures, and realia are used in teaching writing. The teachers also administer writing test to the students by giving video (silent movie), pictures, and realia to describe.

By using scientific approach and those media, the students participate actively during writing class. Also, their works are satisfactory in general. But, it is revealed that some students find some difficulties in writing descriptive paragraph. The problem especially lies on delivering/ generating ideas, grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary. She claimed that in using punctuation and capitalization in their writing, eighty percent (80%) of the students have passed the passing grade. The common mistakes lay on placing full stop and comma. In the aspect of content, 80% of the students' sentences are relevant to the topic. In using simple present tense, eighty percent (80%) of students have passed the passing grade. The common mistakes lay on the use of verbal and nominal sentences. In the aspect of vocabulary, 80% of the students have passed the passing grade in spelling. The students choose the words and use them appropriately based on the context in writing. While in the aspect of organization, 80% of the students follow the features of descriptive paragraph in their writing.

The assessment done by the English teacher is holistic method due to the fact that she teaches large classes. She handles 6 classes which consist of around 33 students each class. She also states that analytical scoring method is not used because it takes time. Based on SMPN 3 Jember 2013 Curriculum, the students achievement itself are categorized from A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, and D.

Related to the previous research finding of descriptive paragraph writing achievement, Maghfiroh (2011: xiv) explains that students of SMPN 2 Lumajang in the 2010/2011 academic year experienced difficulties in the areas of vocabularies, tenses or structure masteries, mechanical skills, organization and content of the paragraph. As a result, they experienced difficulties in composing English writing, especially descriptive paragraph. In addition, from the research done by Satyawati (2014: viii) at SMP Dharma Wiweka Denpasar in academic year 2013/2014, the result of the data analysis showed that: (1) 1 or 2.25% of 40 samples under study got excellent achievement of descriptive paragraph writing, (2) 17 or 42.5% of 40 samples got good achievement, (3) 8 or 20% of 40 samples got sufficient achievement, (4) 10 samples or 25% of 40 samples got insufficient achievement, (5) 4 or 10% of 40 samples got poor achievement. To sum up, the study found out that the students' ability in descriptive paragraph writing was still low. From those two researches, it can be concluded that students of junior high school tend to have difficulties in descriptive paragraph writing. Moreover, from the preliminary study it is revealed that even speed learners still have difficulties in writing.

Considering the explanation above, the researcher is interested to conduct a research entitled "*A Descriptive Study of the Seventh Grade Students' Writing Achievement and Their Difficulties in Descriptive Paragraph at SMPN 3 Jember.*" This research is intended to investigate students writing achievement and their difficulties in descriptive paragraph.

1.2 The Problem of the Research

Based on the background described above, the problem of this research is formulated below.

- How are the seventh grade students' writing achievement and their difficulties in descriptive paragraph at SMPN 3 Jember in the 2014/2015 academic year?

1.3 The Objective of the Research

Based on the research problem, the objective of this research is formulated below.

- To describe the seventh grade students' writing achievement and their difficulties in descriptive paragraph at SMPN 3 Jember in the 2014/2015 academic year based on the aspects of mechanics, content, grammar, vocabulary and organization.

1.4 The Significance of the Research

The result of this research is expected to give some advantages to the English teachers and the future researchers.

1.4.1 The English Teachers

For the English teachers, the result of this research is expected to give the information about the students' ability in writing a descriptive paragraph. Besides, the teachers can find and apply a teaching method for the improvement of the students' ability in writing a descriptive paragraph. Moreover, the teachers will know the mistakes in students' writing and find a way to overcome it.

1.4.2 The Future Researchers

For the future researchers, the result of this research can be used as information about the seventh grade students' writing achievement and their difficulties in descriptive paragraph. Moreover, the result of this research can be a reference and information to conduct a further research on how to improve the students' writing skill with different research design, such as classroom action research or experimental research, applied to different level of students and using different genre of text.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents some theoretical backgrounds related to the research topic. It covers writing ability, the aspects of writing, paragraph, writing descriptive paragraph, problem of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students in mastering writing skill, the assessment of writing, and the practice of teaching English writing in descriptive paragraph at SMPN 3 Jember based on 2013 Curriculum.

2.1 Writing Ability

Writing is a process of communication by expressing the ideas in the form of written language. Fairbairn and Winch (1996:31) mention that writing is a form of communication where the writer normally has someone other than himself to whom he intends to communicate. Furthermore, they state that writing conveys the idea by choosing words and arranging them in a written or printed form (Fairbairn and Winch, 1996:32).

Harmer (2007:6) states that writing and speaking has some similarities and differences. Furthermore, Harmer (2007:7) explains that in term of time and space, it is stated that writing is often permanent, whereas speaking is temporary. But, this important difference between writing and speaking is not absolute. Text messaging, for instance, shares some of the same qualities of immediacy and temporary. Even though people use written word on the internet, live sessions are called *chat* since when computer users are 'talking' to each other in real time, what they type looks more like speaking rather than writing. Sometimes, speech sounds like writing, too. Lectures, for instance, are spoken events, but they are often read out from notes or a complete text.

Writing and speaking are also different in terms of participants, like what Harmer (2007:7) says. A lot of spoken communication happens between people who can see each other. Audience is important in the writing process, that one of an experienced writer' skills are the ability to know who they are writing for. In the speaking, the addressee is often known to us in a specific way, as we have

seen. Furthermore, Harmer (2007:8) adds that a unique feature of speaking is that addresser and addressee frequently swap roles as the conversation continues. So that we can conclude that there are no clear clear-cut boundaries between writing and speaking.

According to Harmer (2007:8), the other difference between writing and speaking can be found in the process. Speaking is usually instant, speakers make quick decisions about what to say and modify it as they speak. Writing is significantly different. The final product is not so instant, and it comes to a result that the writer has a chance to plan and modify what will finally appear as the finished product. But, not all writing is like this. Postcard language, internet writing and text messaging are the examples of the relatively easy writings. Speaking is not always a process-free act too. Careful speakers involve themselves in planning and drafting in their heads before they start to speak. We can conclude that the process of writing is usually more complex than the process of speaking, but not always.

Based on Langan (2008:12), a realistic attitude about writing should be built on two ideas. The first idea is 'writing is hard work for almost everyone'. It is difficult for people to do the intense and active thinking that clear writing demands. It is also stated that writing is not an automatic process. It does need a hard work to result competent writing. According to Brannan (2003:3) accomplished writers are often confused to start their writing, and sometimes they also do not know where the idea comes from. In addition, they produce bad writing in their experimental draft before they reach the final work. It can be concluded that even experienced writer gets into hard process to produce a good writing.

The second idea is 'writing is a skill', just like any other skills, it can be learned (Langan, 2008:12). The belief that writing is a 'natural gift' can influence people to not do their best at writing. In line with the idea, Hughey, et al. (1983:5) explain that writing skill is not acquired naturally because it is usually learned.

From those statements, it can be concluded that writing is not a natural gift and of course people can learn to produce a good writing by doing their best.

2.2 The Aspects of Writing

There are five aspects of writing that we should consider to produce a good writing. They are mechanics, content, grammar, vocabulary and organization.

2.2.1 Mechanics

Essentially, mechanics refers to a set of conventions of technical aspects of writing, including spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and abbreviations, as well as hyphenation and the use of italics (Nordquist: 2013).

Mechanics relating to punctuation and spelling enable the reader to recognize what the writer intends (Bramer and Sedley, 1981:539). Someone will misunderstand the message that is delivered to writing if the writer is unable to apply the mechanic correctly. Inability to use mechanic correctly will also make a sentence ambiguous, and its meaning will be unclear.

Mechanics is crucial in writing. According to Bramer and Sedley (1981:509), mechanics relates to punctuation and spelling in writing enable the reader to recognize what the writer tends to say. In line with Heaton (1991:135), mechanical skill is one of the skills in writing covering the ability to use the convention in the written form. It refers to the use of punctuations, and spellings. Punctuation refers to the sign of marks in order to make the readers understand the writer's ideas. According to Fairbairn and Winch (1996:81) punctuation is the name given to variety of devices that writers use in order to help readers to understand the meaning when they are writing.

Punctuation is a variety of devices that is used to help readers to understand the meaning of writing (Fairbairn and Winch, 1996:81), Further, they say that the use of it allows pause to show breaks to be apparent to the readers. Punctuation will help the readers to understand what the writer intend to communicate if it is used well. In addition, Fairbairn and Winch (1996:97) say that punctuation can

help the writer to communicate both accurately and elegantly. They also give strong emphasis to their readers that the way in which people punctuate can entirely change the meanings they convey. Therefore, it is very essential for everyone to be able to apply punctuation correctly in his or her writing.

There are many kinds of punctuation. According to Fairbairn and Winch (1992:81), the main punctuation devices are: full stop (.), capital letters (A, B, C, D, etc), question mark (?), exclamation mark (!), comma (,), semi-colon (;), colon (:), inverted commas (‘ ’ or “ ”), hyphen (-), brackets (()), dash (single (-) or in pairs (--)), apostrophe (’).

Examples: What do you think of her style? (Question mark)

Zayn went to Europe last year. (full stop)

His name is McQueen. (capital letters)

2.2.2 Content

The quality of writing can be seen from its content, because it is the center of the writing ideas. Lindner (2005:229) states that writer has a responsibility to convey ideas in the clearest possible way. Thus, writing must have a clear content and avoid trite language in order to properly express the writer’s ideas in good paragraph.

The writer must not use too much repetition to avoid monotonous writing. Trite language is not necessary because too much repetition makes a paragraph become less effective. Avoiding trite language will eliminate unnecessary words and sentences that have been written previously, and thus make the writing ideas clearly expressed in more effective writing.

In line with Lindner’s idea, Camp (2001:290) states that the content of a composition must have clarity, conciseness, and completeness. Clarity means that all writing must be clear. It involves choosing the right word, for example, by using proper English, and eliminating trite language. Conciseness means that the writer expresses his or her thought clearly that only a few words are needed. Meanwhile, according to Wingersky et al. (1999:36), completeness means that

there are sufficient details or information in it to give the reader a clear picture or a full discussion of its main idea.

2.2.3 Grammar

Fairbairn and Winch (2011:109) states that grammar is a set of rules that govern the way our language works. According to Thornbury (2003:1), grammar is the study of what forms or structures are possible in a language. In addition, he adds that grammar is the rules that control the form of language's sentences. It can be concluded that grammar is an important thing in constructing writing.

This research analyzes the aspect of grammar used in descriptive paragraph. Descriptive paragraph is using simple present tense.

A. Simple Present Tense

Azar (1999:13) explains that the simple present tense says that something was true in the past, is true in the present, and will be true in the future. It expresses *general statements of fact and timeless truths*. In addition, she says that the simple present tense is used to express *habitual activities*.

In line with above idea, edufind.com (2015) states that simple present tense is used for some purposes. First, it is used to express habits, general truths, repeated actions or unchanging situations, emotions and wishes.

For example:

- **I do exercise** (habit);
- **I work in Paris** (unchanging situation);
- **Paris is a large city** (general truth).

Secondly, it is used to give instructions or directions. For instance: **You walk** for three hundred metres, and then **you turn** right. The third usage is to express fixed arrangements, present or future. For example: Your class **starts** at 06.30 a.m. The last usage is to express future time, after some conjunctions: *after, when, before, as soon as, until*.

Here is the example:

- **He will return it to you when you come next Monday.**

The sentence constructions of Simple Present Tense are in the next page.

Verbal sentence (+) S + V1 + complement.

(-) S + do not + V1 + complement.

(?) Do + S + V1 + complement?

Nominal sentence (+) S + be + complement.

(-) S + be + not + complement.

(?) Be + S + complement?

Some examples of Simple Present Tense are as follows.

- a. Cats **have** four legs. (showing fact)
- b. He **draws** his favorite anime characters everyday. (showing habitual activity)

2.2.4 Vocabulary

The term vocabulary refers to interchangeably to word recognition and word meaning development (Blachowicz et. al, [2005:2). According to Hornby (2000:1506), vocabulary is all the words that a person knows or uses.

Vocabulary plays an important role in writing because it is a tool to express ideas and meanings in communication, especially in writing. The more knowledge that someone have about vocabulary, the richer and better his writing will be.

William (1970:14) states that vocabulary is divided into two categories as follows:

1. Large vocabularies cover nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.

Noun refers to a person, a place or a thing (Hatch and Brown, 1995:12).

For example: *Louis, garden, chair*

- *Louis is a fashion designer.*
- *The painting is hers.*

Verb is a word that shows an action, such as run, watch, bring, etc. it also can be in the form of to be, for instance: am, is, are, were, was, been, and being (Wingersky, et al, 1999: 61).

- *He drives very fast.*
- *My little brother plays at the garden.*

Adjective is a word that describes nouns and pronouns. It is also describes by answering “which one” and “how many”, for example: old, young, ugly, big, and so on.

- *Donna is fifty years old.*
- *Chiko is an adorable cat.*

Adverb is a word that describes or modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb

- *I went to Tokyo last year.*
- *Daniel speaks loudly.*

Pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun, for example: he, it, hers, me, them, and so on.

- *This notebook is hers.*
- *I go to the mall with them.*

2. Small vocabularies cover conjunctions, prepositions, articles, and interjections.

Conjunction is a word that joins items (words, phrases or sentences), for example: and, but, or, yet, so, and so on.

- *My father is an author and my mother is a teacher.*

Article has a function to modify nouns such as a, an, and the

- *He is a politician.*

According to Wingersky, et al(1999:61) preposition is used with a noun or pronoun to form a phrase that shows location, time, ownership or identification, or exclusion within the sentence, for example: in, at, down, and so on.

- *My purse is on the table.*

2.2.5 Organization

Organization refers to how the students arrange their ideas in writing. Lindner (2005:237) mentions that writers must organize their writing well so it is presented in a way that makes sense to the reader. The first thing to be concerned is whether the students follow the generic structure of descriptive paragraph.

The next thing to be concerned is unity and coherence as claimed by Kanar (1998:74). Unity means that all sentences in a good paragraph relate to the topic sentence or main idea (Wingersky *et al.*, 1999:41). When any ideas does not relate specifically to the topic sentence, then that paragraph lacks of unity or it is not unified. A piece of writing will have good organization if all the sentences or the details support the main idea and they relate to each other, hence, there will be no relevant sentence in it.

The other requirement of a good paragraph is coherence. Coherence means how well ideas will hold together. Dealing with this point, Wong (1999:369) states that coherence means the ideas and sentences flow smoothly in a logical, organized manner. This idea is in line with Carino (1991:160), who states that coherence occurs when each sentence follow logically and clearly from one sentence to the following sentences. Based on the idea, a writer should plan what sentence that will be put first, next and what sentence will be used to end up the writing. To make all the sentences connected each other, the writer needs to use transitions or connectors, such as however, although, later, next, finally, and so on. The transitions or connectors will help the writer express their ideas smoothly in order to make the reader get well understanding of the writing.

2.3 Paragraph

Gould (2011) states that a paragraph is a group of connected sentences which develops one new topic, idea or theme. They are the “building blocks” of your writing, dividing it into easy-to-follow, comprehensible parts. Childs *et al.* (1999:2) add each sentence in a paragraph develops one *single* main idea. If a paragraph does this, it is said to have *unity*. In addition, each sentence in a paragraph must be related to the one before and after it, like links in a chain, by using special words called *transitions*. If a paragraph contains these links, it is said to have *coherence*.

Furthermore, Childs *et al.* (1999:3) explain that very good paragraph not only has to have unity and coherence, but it must also have structure. It starts with

an interesting beginning called *an introduction*. Then, it is followed by specific details called *the body*. Finally, it is ended up with a satisfying ending called *the conclusion*. If a paragraph contains these three sections, it can be said that the paragraph has good structure.

2.4 Writing Descriptive Paragraph

Descriptive writing is like painting a real life picture, like what Childs et al. (1999:34) states. The writer has a picture in his/her mind that he/she wants to deliver to the reader. Then, the writer describes that picture by presenting specific details in an organized way. Descriptive writing needs the use of specific details and vocabulary that carries a strong meaning. The idea is also supported by learnamericanenglishonline.com (2015) which states that a descriptive paragraph describes a thing, a person, or a place. In addition, detailed information allows the reader to form an image in his or her imagination. Furthermore, the better description leads to the clearer image.

Childs et al. (1999:34), explain that another aspect of good descriptive writing is that the details the writer provides should attract to as many of the five senses as possible. People gather information about the world around them in only five ways, their five senses. In order to deliver information about a scene, the writer has to give the reader the same kind of information he/she would get about it on his/her own. It means that the writer must tell not only what he/she sees, but also what he/she smells, tastes, touches and hears. For example, a scene in a garden might include details of the smell of flowers, the sound of bees, and the feeling of warmth from the sunshine. With all the details, the reader has got the information he/she needs to imagine being there.

Based on Garnett (2003:19), there are four points of the generic structure in descriptive. It covers *identification or introduction* which is a part of paragraph which identifies or introduces the character to be described. It can be called general description of the object. Usually, it contains object's name, kind of the object, etc. The next is *description* which is a part of paragraph which

describes parts, qualities, and characteristics of the person or something that will be described. It should be described in detail, so the readers can get clear description of the object. Then, *special features* which are the description that also includes special or unique features of the person or object. The last is *conclusion* which is a concluding statement that may be a fact or an opinion. Anderson and Anderson (2003:26) state that the grammatical features of descriptive are as follows: verbs in the present tense, and adjective to describe the features of the subject.

The following is the example generic structure in descriptive paragraph:

Table 2.1: Generic Structure of Descriptive Paragraph

Generic Structure of Descriptive Paragraph	Model Paragraph
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction This introduces who or what is being described. 	<i>Rick Turnip</i> , the highwayman, is once again on the loose. (Sentence 1)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description This is the main body, which explores the features of the person or object, for example, the appearance, behaviour, habits, qualities, uses, etc. 	He's <i>tall, slim man aged about 25</i> . He's got <i>dark hair and eyes</i> . He wears a <i>purple hat with a turned-up brim and a long black cloak</i> . He has a <i>mean scowl on his face, a deep voice and, worst of all, a long jagged scar on his chin!</i> (Sentence 2 – sentence 5)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Features The description also includes special or unique features of the person or object. 	He is <i>mean and cold, with a heart of steel</i> ;... (sentence 6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclusion This is a concluding statement which may be a fact or an opinion. 	...; <i>so beware!</i> (sentence 6)

(Adapted from Garnett, 2003:18-19)

2.5 Problem of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) Students in Mastering Writing Skill

Cahyono and Widiati (2011:75) explain that English as a foreign language in Indonesia is only taught in schools as a subject; it is not used in society as official communication. Indonesian students learn English in schools as a subject they study. Meanwhile, in the social life, they use *Bahasa Indonesia* as official language, not English. In line with this idea, Troike (2006:4) states that a foreign language is not one commonly used in the learners' immediate social context which might be used for future travel or cross-cultural communication, or studied as a curricular requirement or elective in school, but with no immediate or necessary practical application.

Writing English as a foreign language in Indonesia is considered as not an easy task. Bram (1995:25) states that for most beginning writers whose mother tongue is not English, it is sometimes difficult to express what they intend. This is supported by Soedjatmiko and Widiati (2002) as cited by Cahyono and Widiati (2011:78) who indicate that most of the subjects in their study, not limited to less skilled writers, used their mother tongue in the beginning stage of the writing process. They think in the first language (*Bahasa Indonesia*) and then translate it into English.

Mukminatien (2003) states that many problems arise in connection with the development of English as Foreign Language (EFL) productive skills, especially in the area of writing. This is reasonable because writing involves the process of composing message, thinking of the language to use, taking care of diction, textual organization, and other mechanics. In line with this idea, Hyland (2003) states that writing in a second language is great challenge for of EFL learners, it is because writing in a second language is complex. It needs ability to communicate the ideas and also the knowledge of the language which may relating to mechanics, grammar, vocabulary and organization. In addition, Taselin (2011:104) says that the problem of writing for Indonesian students seems to

deeply root from the students' first language teaching. Classroom writing does not go further from merely classroom activity for most of the students.

Furthermore, Taselin in Cahyono (2011:108) reveals that the common problems faced by students in secondary level are their lack of vocabulary, their difficulties in constructing the sentences, and their lack of ideas to write. But, there are activities involved in the classroom process to deal with writing as proposed by Hyland (2003:11), start from selecting the topic, prewriting, composing, responding to draft, revising, responding to revisions, proofreading and editing, evaluating, publishing, and follow-up task.

However, the teachers can modify the writing process in such a way to cope with the students' problem in writing since they may have their own problems faced which is different from one to another. At last, with proper contextual awareness and with appropriate writing instruction, all learners can become better writers (Hyland, 2003).

2.6 The Assessment of Writing

Hughes (2003:94) states there are two basic scoring methods in writing: holistic and analytic scoring.

Holistic or impressionistic scoring is the way of scoring the students' work based on the general impression. Hughes (2003:94) explains that holistic scoring is a method of scoring which scores a piece of writing based on overall impression on it. According to Hughes (2003:95), this scoring method has the advantage of being very rapid. It is possible for the experienced scorers to give score to the students' writing in only two minutes or even less. Furthermore, it enables the scorers to score a piece of writing more than once. It means that it does not too much time to score all of the students' writing if the teacher uses holistic scoring. However, Hughes (2003:105) states that holistic scoring is less accurate than analytical scoring. If the teacher applies holistic scoring, he cannot give the students detail information about their strengths and weaknesses. As the

result, the students will not know whether or not they need to improve their ability in the certain aspects of writing.

The other scoring method is analytic. Hughes (2003:100) explains that analytic scoring is methods of scoring which needs a separate score for each of a number of aspects of a task. Furthermore, Hughes (2003:102) says there are some advantages of using analytic scoring. First, it disposes of the problem of uneven development of subskills in individuals. Secondly, scorers have to consider aspects of performance which they might ignore. And the last, the scorer has to give a number of score will tend to make the scoring more reliable.

There are also some disadvantages of analytic scoring, like Hughes (2003:103) has mentioned. First, it deals with the time that it takes. Secondly, the concentration on the different aspects may take attention away from the overall effect of the piece of writing.

In this research, the analytic scoring method is applied because the goal of this research is to know and describe the students' writing achievement in descriptive paragraph based on the aspects of writing. Each aspect of writing will be scored separately in order to know the accurate information about the students' achievement in the aspects of writing. The scoring focuses on the aspect of grammar, mechanics, vocabulary, and content.

2.7 The Practice of Teaching English Writing in Descriptive Paragraph at SMPN 3 Jember Based on 2013 Curriculum

This research focuses on describing the seventh grade students' writing achievement in descriptive paragraph at SMPN 3 Jember in the 2014/2015 academic year. The students' achievement in writing is related to the teaching strategies used by teacher. Based on the interview with the English teacher on Tuesday, January 13th 2015, the school applies 2013 Curriculum (K-13) which uses scientific approach method. Scientific approach includes observing (*Mengamati*), questioning (*Bertanya*), collecting information (*Mengumpulkan Informasi*), associating (*Menalar*), creating (*Mencipta*) and communicating

(*Mengkomunikasikan*). Each meeting itself lasts for eighty minutes. The Curriculum 2013 which is designed to make the students have a high order of thinking through the Scientific Approach is certainly a great challenge for the English teachers.

As a former International Standard School (*Rintisan Sekolah Berstandar Internasional [RSBI]*), SMPN 3 Jember is chosen as one of the pilot schools to apply the Curriculum 2013 along with four other junior high schools in Jember, namely SMPN 2 Jember, SMPN 10 Jember, SMPN 1 Jenggawah dan SMPN 2 Puger. The 2013 Curriculum consists of four Content Competences (Kompetensi Inti). The first Content Competence is respecting and comprehending religion doctrine (*Menghargai dan menghayati ajaran agama yang dianutnya*) which also known as spiritual character. The second Content Competence is respecting and comprehending honesty, discipline, responsibility, caring, tolerant, cooperation, sympathy, confidence characters in interact with social and nature environments effectively in society and existency scope (*Menghargai dan menghayati perilaku jujur, disiplin, tanggungjawab, peduli, toleransi, gotong royong, santun, percaya diri, dalam berinteraksi secara efektif dengan lingkungan sosial dan alam dalam jangkauan pergaulan dan keberadaanya*) which also known as social character. The third is understanding factual, conceptual, and procedural knowledge based on curiosity about knowledge, technology, art, culture related to visible phenomenon and occurrence (*Memahami pengetahuan factual, konseptual dan procedural berdasarkan rasa ingin tahunya tentang ilmu pengetahuan, teknologi, seni, budaya terkait fenomena dan kejadian tampak mata*) which also known as knowledge. The last Content Competence is trying, processing, and providing various things in real context (using, analyzing, combining, modifying, and making) and abstract context (writing, reading, calculating, drawing, and composing) based on what has been learned in school and from various other sources in the same point of view or theory (*mencoba, mengolah, dan menyaji dalam ranah konkret [menggunakan, mengurai, merangkai, memodifikasi, dan membuat] dan ranah abstrak [menulis, membaca, menghitung, menggambar, dan*

mengarang] sesuai dengan yang dipelajari di sekolah dan sumber lain yang sama dalam sudut pandang/ teori.) (Kemendikbud, 2014:3)

Those four Content Competences are elaborated into Basic Competences (*Kompetensi Dasar*). The Basic competence for English skill is arranging verbal and non verbal texts for stating and asking about transactional and interpersonal teks, descriptive texts and procedure texts by paying attention at social function, text structure and language aspects correctly and based on the context” (*menyusun teks lisan dan tulis untuk menyatakan dan menanyakan teks transaksional dan interpersonal, deskriptif teks dan teks prosedur dengan memperhatikan fungsi sosial, struktur teks dan unsur kebahasaan yang benar dan sesuai konteks*). (Kemendikbud, 2014:4).

As suggested in K-13 guidebook by Kemendikbud (2014:46), there are six steps in the main activities of scientific approach method. They are observing, questioning, collecting information, associating, creating and communicating. The learning activity started by observing pictures, audio visual materials, texts, or real objects related to the topic discussed. Based on that activity, students are stimulated to formulate questions. The data collected from the answer of the questions, then analyzed as new information. Through a group discussion, then students present their work in front of the class.

In teaching writing, the first activity is observing a model text. Then students answer some questions based on the content of the text. After that, through group discussion, students complete a worksheet related to the features of the text. As the last activity, students write a paragraph based on the model text individually and present it in front of the classroom. While students present their writing, the teacher gives written and oral feedback. Based on the feedback, the students revise their writing. The detail of the teaching learning process can be seen in teacher’s lesson plan in appendix 3.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter presents the explanation about the research method which is applied in this research. It consists of research design, area determination method, subject determination method, the operational definitions of the terms, data collection method, and data analysis method. Each point is presented in detail below.

3.1 Research Design

The design of this research was descriptive study because this research was intended to describe the seventh grade students' writing achievement in descriptive paragraph at SMPN 3 Jember in the 2014/2015 academic year. Descriptive study is a kind of study which uses non-experiment procedure (Arikunto, 2006:82). It means that the researcher only has to describe the real situation of the respondent without giving any treatment to manipulate the condition of the respondent itself. Based on Fraenkel and Wallen's idea (2009:14), descriptive studies describe a given situation as fully and carefully as possible. They add that the examples of descriptive studies in education include identifying the achievements of various groups of students; describing the behaviors of teachers, administrators, or counselors; describing the attitudes of parents; and describing the physical capabilities of schools. The description of phenomena is the starting point for all research attempts.

The procedures of the present research were as follows:

1. Determining the research area by using purposive method.
2. Collecting secondary data through preliminary study.
3. Determining the research respondents by using cluster random sampling.
4. Constructing the research instrument of the writing test.
5. Consulting the instrument to the thesis consultants and the English teacher.
6. Administering a tryout of the writing test.
7. Collecting the data by giving a writing test to the respondents.

8. Scoring the writing test by using Jacobs et al.'s scoring rubric.
9. Finding out the mean score of the writing test.
10. Classifying the score based on the interpretation of the score level.
11. Drawing the conclusion to answer the research problem.

3.2 Area Determination Method

SMPN 3 Jember was determined as the area of this research by using purposive method. According to Arikunto (2000:128), purposive method is a method of choosing the area of the research based on a certain purpose or reason. This research was conducted in SMPN 3 Jember because of some reasons. They were as follows:

1. The researcher got permission from the principal to conduct this research so that the data can be obtained from school.
2. Writing descriptive paragraph had been taught to the seventh grade students of SMPN 3 Jember in even semester.
3. The data about the students' achievement in writing descriptive paragraph through descriptive study and the scoring of writing using analytical method were not available yet in this school.

3.3 Subject Determination Method

The respondents of this research were the seventh grade students of SMPN 3 Jember in the 2014/2015 academic year. There were eight classes of the seventh grade students which consisted of 7A to 7H classes with the total number was 266 people. So that, each class consisted of around 33 students.

According to Arikunto (2006:134), if the total number of the subject is less than 100, it is better to take all of them as samples. On the other hand, if the total number of the subject is more than 100, the sample can be taken from 10-15%, 20-25%, or more out of the population. In this research, cluster random sampling was used as a method to determine the respondents. McMillan (1992:74) explains that cluster random sampling refers to the random selection of group or

areas and then the selection of individual element of the chosen group. The result of the students' previous writing showed that the mean scores of the students' writing in each class range between 88-90. The mean of the previous writing scores in each class was as follows:

Table 3.1: The Mean Scores of the Students' Previous Writing

Class	The Mean Scores of Writing
7 A	89,53
7 B	90,09
7 C	90,15
7 D	88,55
7 E	89,12
7 F	88,03
7 G	89,15
7 H	89,74

The analysis by using ANOVA had been done by the researcher to know whether the writing ability among students of 7A – 7H were homogeneous or not. From the result of ANOVA in appendix 5, it could be said that the seventh grade students' writing ability at SMPN 3 Jember was homogenous so that the respondents were taken from one class randomly by lottery. In this research, the respondents were the students of 7B.

3.4 The Operational Definition of the Key Terms

An operational definition were used as a guide to understand the concept used in the research. The terms which were operationally defined were descriptive study, writing achievement, difficulties and descriptive paragraph.

1. Descriptive Study

Descriptive study in this research means a type of research which had the purpose to describe the seventh grade students' writing achievement and their difficulties in descriptive paragraph at SMPN 3 Jember in 2014/2015 academic year.

2. Writing achievement

Writing achievement in this research was the scores the students obtained in writing a paragraph describing the characteristics and the behaviors of a person. The achievement was categorized from A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, and D.

3. Difficulties

Difficulties referred to the problem the students faced when they were required to write descriptive paragraph consisting of difficulties in mechanic, content, grammar, vocabulary and organization.

4. Descriptive paragraph

Descriptive paragraph is a paragraph which describes a person, animal, thing or place. In this research, the students described their idols. They had to write descriptive paragraph which consisted of 10 - 15 sentences.

3.5 Data Collection Method

Data collection method is a method which is used to gain the relevant information in the research. Arikunto (2000:134) states that there are some methods which can be used to collect the data. They are interview, observation, test, documentation, etc. In this research, the data used were obtained through writing test, interview, and documentation. Writing test was used to collect the primary data about the students' writing scores whereas interview and documentation were used to obtain the secondary data. Secondary data means data which was used to support the primary data.

3.5.1 Writing Test

In this research, the test was about writing a descriptive paragraph to obtain the data which deal with the students' writing score. The test used was in the form of subjective test. It was because the test required the respondents to give the answer in the form of written descriptive paragraph. The students' answers measured the seventh grade students' writing achievement in descriptive paragraph based on the aspects of mechanics, content, grammar, vocabulary and organization.

In the test, students were asked to write a descriptive paragraph based on the directions given. First direction stated that each of the students had to compose a descriptive paragraph by using topic 'My Idol'. The topic was chosen by the researcher because it is common for teenagers to have an idol. So that, the topic would be familiar to them and it was expected that they would easily express their ideas about their idols. Second, the students had to describe an idol in the descriptive paragraph which covered physical appearance and personality. Third, the paragraph consisted of 10 up to 15 sentences. Then, the students were told that this test will be scored based on the five aspects of writing namely mechanics, content, grammar, vocabulary and organization. Time allocation of the writing test was 45 minutes and they were not allowed to use dictionary.

One of the criteria of a good test is validity. Fraenkel and Wallen (1996:153) state that in a research, validity becomes the most important thing to consider in preparing or selecting an instrument. It means that the writing test used to obtain the data in this research has to be valid. According to Hughes (2003:26), a test can be categorized as a valid test if it measures accurately what is intended to measure. It can be concluded that the writing test in this research has to measure the students' ability in writing.

There are two kinds of validity used in the writing test in this research; they are content validity and face validity. According to Hughes (2003:26), content validity in a test means that test has to contain a thing that can be a representative sample of the language skills, structures, etc. which is meant to be

concerned. It means that the content of the test used in this research has to be able to measure the students' ability in writing. The validity was established by constructing a test with the materials which were based on the curriculum and the syllabus of Junior High School for the seventh grade students. Furthermore, the validity was also established by consulting the materials of the test with the English teacher and the consultants to know whether those materials were appropriate to the seventh grade students or not.

Face validity is another kind of validity used in the test. Hughes (2003:33) explains that a test has face validity if it looks as if it measures what should be measured. It means that the writing test used in this research required the students to write. In this test, face validity was established by constructing a writing test which was made up of an item relating to the knowledge of writing and its aspects. Therefore, in this test, the students were required to show their ability in writing based on the aspects of writing.

The other criterion of a good test is reliability. Fraenkel and Wallen (1996:160) note that reliability deals with the consistency of the scores obtained by the students. In line with this idea, Hughes (2003:50) states that a test must provide consistently accurate measurements to become a valid test. Therefore, it must be reliable. In this research, the reliability was established by using inter rater as a method of scoring. Inter rater is one of the methods of scoring which enables a test to be scored by two scorers. In this research, the students' writing scored by the researcher as scorer 1 and the researcher's colleague (SA) who is a graduate from the same department with the researcher as scorer 2. This colleague has no interaction with the students, so that it can reduce the subjectivity. The result of the scores from the researcher and her colleague were analyzed to obtain the mean scores of the students' writing ability.

The students' writing were scored by using analytical scoring method. Jacobs et al. (2003:100) provides a separate score of each writing aspects that consist of mechanics, content, grammar, vocabulary and organization. The analytic scoring method adapted from Jacobs et al. can be seen in appendix 6.

3.5.2 Interview

Interview was used to collect the secondary data needed in this research. According to Singarimbun (in Effendi and Singarimbun, 1995:192), interview is a process of interaction and communication. It is supported by Bungin (2006:126), who notes that interview is a process of collecting data in a research by doing question and answer method from an interviewer to one or more interviewees. It means that interview is one of the methods to collect the data which requires the interviewer to ask some questions related to the information needed to the interviewee as the respondent.

The technique of interview which is applied in this research is semi-structured interview. According to Arikunto (2006:202), semi-structured interview is one of the techniques of interview which requires the interviewer to ask the questions which have been prepared. Then, the interviewer modifies the questions by asking the other questions to get more detail information. In this research, the interview was conducted with one of the English teachers who teach in the seventh grade at SMPN 3 Jember. It can be said that the interviewer was the researcher, whereas the interviewee was the English teacher. This interview was used to obtain the data about the curriculum for Junior High School which is used by the English teacher of the seventh grade, the teaching of writing a descriptive paragraph at SMPN 3 Jember, and the seventh grade students' ability in writing a descriptive paragraph. Besides, from this interview, it could be known the students difficulties in writing and its aspects. Moreover, the interview was used to obtain the data about the minimum score of English in this school so that it could be known whether or not the result of the students' writing was able to pass the minimum score.

3.5.3 Documentation

Another method of collecting data used in this research is documentation. Arikunto (2006:206) confirms that documentation is obtaining the data about certain thing or variable in the forms of notes, transcript, books, newspaper,

magazine, ancient inscriptions, notes from meeting, *legger*, agenda, etc. In this research, the school documents which were used were conversion table (see table 3.2), table of minimum standard score (see table 3.3), the names of the seventh grade students at SMPN 3 Jember in 2014/2015 academic year and the students' mean score of the previous writing achievement (see appendix 4). Conversion table was used as the researcher guidance to determine the students' writing score based on 2013 Curriculum. Then, table of minimum standard score was used as the source which shows English passing grade as compared to those of other subjects. The last document was used as a guide to determine the respondents of this research.

3.6 Data Analysis Method

Data analysis method is the way of analyzing the data which have been obtained. Arikunto (2006:213) explains that there are two kinds of data in a descriptive study; qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative data are data which are represented in the form of words or sentences whereas quantitative data are the data in the form of numbers which can be analyzed by using some statistics formula. In this research, the primary data used are in the form of students' writing scores.

Bungin (2006:72) confirms that in descriptive study, the quantitative data obtained can be analyzed by using the descriptive statistics. According to Gay, et al. (2011:322), there are some major types of descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, measures of central tendency, measures of variability, measures of relative positions, and measures of relationship. Further, Sarwono (2011:145) explains that the statistics formulas which can be used in descriptive analysis are frequency, percentage, and mean score.

In this research, the statistics formula will be used to analyze the students' writing scores is the formula of mean score which is categorized as descriptive statistics of measures of central tendency. Gay, et al. (2011:323) confirm that mean score is determined by adding up all of the scores and dividing

that sum by the total number of respondents. In this research, the mean score will be obtained by adding up all of the students' writing scores and dividing it by the total number of the students who took that writing test. The formula for computing the mean score is as follows:

$$X = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

Notes:

X : the mean score of the students' descriptive paragraph writing

$\sum x$: the sum of all scores which the students get

N : the total number of students who take the test

(taken from Gay, et al. [2011:323])

By finding out the mean scores of the students' writing achievement and its aspects, it will be easier to classify and interpret the students' ability into some classifications which deal with grading. Guskey and Pollio (2009) explain that grading refers to the students' evaluation on their performance over a certain period of time. In addition, they add that grading is used to categorize the students into some different levels of achievement or performance.

There are some types of grading used to evaluate the students' performance. Guskey and Pollio (2009) confirm that grading can be in the form of letters such as A, B, C, D and E; descriptive words such as *exemplary*, *satisfactory*, and *needs improvement*; and numbers such as 4, 3, 2, 1. They also add that each of the type of grading can be varied. For example, there are some variations of grading in the form of descriptive words such as three-point scale grading which uses the categories of *excellent*, *average*, and *poor*; and five-point scale grading which uses the categories of *excellent*, *good*, *average*, *poor*, and *failed*. In this research, the type of grading used is grading in the form of letters since the students' mean scores will be classified and categorized as A, A-, B+, B, B- and so on.

In teaching learning process, grading plays some roles which are useful for both of the students and the teachers. Walvoord and Anderson (in Adams, 1998:2) state that there are four roles of grading. First, grading is used to evaluate the students' ability. It means that grading is a mean to provide the information about the students' learning result. If their result is in good level, they need to maintain it. On the other hand, if their result is in a fair or poor level, they need to learn more and improve it. Second, grading is used to communicate the students' achievement status to their parents. In other words, grading enables the parents to know how well their children learn and in what level their ability is placed. Third, grading is able to motivate the students. The students with the low grade are motivated to learn more and improve their ability since they want to reach the better grade. Fourth, grading is able to organize the students' learning progress and result. It means that grading is able to be used as the document of the students' learning so that it can be known whether the teaching learning activity is effective or not. If most of the students are in a fair or poor level, the teacher will be able to find the other teaching techniques or media to improve the students' ability.

In the Curriculum 2013, there are three components of competencies, namely attitude, knowledge, and skill competency. Those three competencies have different scoring techniques. Writing which is involved in knowledge competence, will be scored through written test and assignment. Furthermore, the mean scores of the students' writing are classified by using interpretation of score levels showed in the next page:

Table 3.2 Conversion Table

No.	Average Score (KI-3)	Letter
1.	3,85 - 4,00	A
2.	3,51 - 3,84	A-
3.	3,18 - 3,50	B+
4.	2,85 - 3,17	B
5.	2,51 - 2,84	B-
6.	2,18 - 2,50	C+
7.	1,85 - 2,17	C
8.	1,51 - 1,84	C-
9.	1,18 - 1,50	D+
10.	1,00 - 1,17	D

(SMPN 3 Jember Curriculum 2013 document: 2014)

To use the score interpretation table the formula is:

$$\text{Score} = \left(\frac{\text{earned score}}{\text{maximum score}} \times 100 \right) : 25$$

- For instance, the *maximum score* of a test is 40, and a student got 34, then the *score* is calculated as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Score} &= (34/40 \times 100) : 25 \\ &= 85 : 25 \\ &= 3,4 \text{ (B+)} \end{aligned}$$

SMPN 3 Jember has high standard of scoring, which is the minimum standard score requirement is 80 (3.20). It means that the students who obtain the scores below 80 (3.20) are required to have a remedial test as a chance for them to be able to pass the minimum score requirement. The following table shows English passing grade as compared to those of other subjects.