Problem of Writing Personal Letter in German to Students at the State University of Surabaya Base on *Gemeinsamen Europäischen Referenzrahmen*

Fahmi Wahyuningsih[(✉)], Raden Roro Dyah Parnaningroem, and Lutfi Saksono

Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Surabaya, Indonesia
`fahmiwahyuningsih@unesa.ac.id`

Abstract. The results and discussion of this article indicate that there are problems in writing letters by students at the German Language Education Study Program, Department of German Language and Literature, UNESA. This study aims to find the problems of students in writing personal letters of students in writing personal letters based on the GER (*Gemeinsamen europäischen Referenzrahmen für Sprachen*). This research type is descriptive qualitative. Subjects were 25 fourth semester students of the 2020 batch who programmed *Schriftlicher Ausdruck* course. Data in the form of words, sentences, phrases in personal letters written by students. The overall data obtained were analyzed through several stages: (1) Data reduction, (2) Data presentation, (3) Conclusions. The research found three aspects of students' problems in writing personal letters, including: 1) *Berücksichtigung der Leitpunkte*, 2) *Communicative Gestaltung*, and 3) *Formale Richtigkeit*. In the *Berücksichtigung der Leitpunkte* aspect, 9 people or 36% could write the four *Leitpunkte* correctly in terms of content and scope, while 16 people (64%) wrote less than four *Leitpunkte* and with limited coverage. The Communicative Aspect of *Gestaltung* in 12 people (48%) of sentence links between *Leitpunkte* is systematic and coherent, while 13 people (52%) there is a systematic jump and coherence between sentences in the written letter text. Based on the results of the analysis, in the *Richtigkeit Formale* aspect, problems were found in the fields of morphology (6.3%), morphic-syntax (28%), syntax contained (16.6%), lexical (18.1%), orthographic (31%).

Keywords: writing problems · writing letter · GER

1 Introduction

Writing is one of the important skills needed by students when learn German. The German curriculum requires students to write personal letters to improve their writing skills, but many students are still having problems.

One of the communication media in the form of writing is a letter. According to [1] a letter is a means to convey information in writing from one party to another. The information can be in the form of notices, statements, questions, requests, attitudes, and

others. In other words, a letter is a communication tool in the form of writing that is used for various purposes. The use of letters as a means of communication has many advantages.

Furthermore, [2] The advantages of letters compared to oral communication tools are that they can reduce misunderstandings in communication, because the author can convey his meaning as clearly as possible. The receiver can read repeatedly as needed. In addition to the statements above, other advantages of letters are practical, effective, and economical. Based on its contents, letters can be divided into three types, namely personal, official, trade letters. Therefore, letters are one means of effective written communication, however, to write letters, it is required to master the knowledge of correspondence, especially the use of good and correct language in writing letters. Correspondence is included in writing skills.

Letter writing skills are taught starting in the first semester and are part of the German language proficiency test (ZIDS) for students of the German Language Education Study Program, Unesa German Language and Literature Department and German language students from other universities in Indonesia that are taken in semester 4. Exams German language proficiency is called ZIDS, an abbreviation of Zertifikat für Indonesische Deutsch-Studenten at the end of 4th semester.

This exam is one of the mandatory components in the German curriculum. In addition to being mandatory, this exam is also mandatory for German language students in the Strata-1 program. Based on data from the ZIDS Exam, it was found that there were still many mistakes made by students in writing personal letters (persönlicher Briefs) where the pass rate in each exam period was less than 50%. In addition, in semester 4 students also program the *Schriftlicher Ausdruck* course, where in this lecture, letter material is also discussed. Even in this lecture, there are still many problems related to writing this letter.

This proves that the teaching of writing skills has not been effective so far and this problem needs to be solved. One of the first steps in the solution which is believed to give good results is to conduct an analysis to see the students' problems in writing personal German letters. The problems that arise that are done by students and which become problems in writing this letter are reviewed based on three aspects of the *Gemeinsamer Europäischer Referenzrahmen* (GER) assessment criteria: (1)Four main thoughts (*Berücksichtigung der Leitpunkte*), (2) Sentence coherence (Kommunikative Gestalltung), (3) German grammatical accuracy (*Formale Richtigkeit*).

Based on the background above, the following problems can be stated: (1) what problems do students face in the *Berücksichtigung der Leitpunkte* aspect of writing personal letters?, (2) what problems do students face in writing personal letters based on the (*Kommunikative Gestalltung*) aspect?, (3) what mistakes do students make in writing personal letters according to German grammar (*Formale Richtigkeit*)?

This study aims to: (1) find out the problems experienced by students in deciphering the main ideas (*Berücksichtigung der Leitpunkte*) in writing personal letters in German, (2) knowing the problems experienced by students in writing personal letters based on sentence coherence (*Kommunikative Gestaltung*), (3) knowing the problems experienced by students in writing personal letters according to German grammar (*Formale Richtigkeit*). Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested in examining

Table 1. GER levels

A. *Elementare Sprachverwendung*	A1
	A2
B. *Selbständige Sprachverwendung*	B1
	B2
C. *Kompetente Sprachverwendung*	C1
	C2

the problems of writing that are contained in a personal letter written by a student who programmed the *Schriftlicher Ausdruck* course.

2 Literature review

2.1 Gemeinsamer Europäischer Referenzrahmen (GER)

The *Gemeinsamer Europäischer Referenzrahmen* (GER) or in English is called the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

In [3] it is stated "Der GER (*Gemeinsamer Europäischer Referenz-rahmen*) *ist ein System, das Lernen und Lehren von Sprachen und das Beurteilen von Sprachkompetenzen nach gemeinsamen Kriterien beschreibt und vergleichbar macht*." (It is a system created to allow for the same criteria for learning, teaching language and its assessment, and allowing for comparison).

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) was developed by the Council of Europe in 1991 and provides a common basis for the development of target language curricula, examinations, textbooks and more across Europe. It helps teachers and language learners to assess language competence and to determine the knowledge and skills that learners must develop in order to act communicatively successfully and use language for communicative purposes.

The level of mastery of the German language based on the GER reference is divided into three levels and each level consists of two language levels, as follows at Table 1.

Levels A1 and A2 are basic levels, B1 and B2 are intermediate levels, and C1 and C2 are high levels.

UNESA graduates are determined to have at least attained the level of mastery of B1 in German language competence. Therefore, in the first four semesters students are focused on achieving the targeted language skill level. Based on the GER reference, the language level of students at Unesa is at the basic level B1 (Niveau B1). According to this GER formulation, the minimum level of German language proficiency is independent B1.

Writing competence at B1 level is characterized by the ability to write simple short essays and write simple personal letters.

Table 2. Assessment Criteria based on GER

Berücksichtigung der Leitpunkte Criteria	Points
Discusses the four *Leitpunkte* in terms of content and true scope.	5
Discussing four *Leitpunkte* in terms of content and scope is correct, but the scope is discussed in a limited way or three *Leitpunkte* are discussed in terms of content and scope correctly.	4
Discussing three *Leitpunkte* in terms of content is correct, but its scope is limited or two *Leitpunkte* is discussed in terms of content correctly, but its scope is very limited.	3
Only two *Leitpunkte* are properly discussed in terms of content and scope.	2
Only one *Leitpunkte* is properly discussed in terms of content and scope.	1
Not discussing about *Leitpunkte*/misunderstood the theme.	0
Kommunikative Gestaltung Criteria	**Points**
Cohesion and coherence between sentences is very good.	5
Cohesion and coherence between sentences is good.	4
Cohesion and coherence between sentences is not very good, but understandable.	3
Cohesion and coherence between sentences is not fit, and a bit difficult to understand.	2
Cohesion and coherence of sentences cannot be understood.	1
No cohesion and coherence between sentences.	0
Kommunikative Gestaltung Criteria	**Points**
There are no errors in syntax, morphology and orthography. All assignment points answered.	5
There are some errors in syntax, morphology and orthography, but understandable. All assignment points answered.	4
There are some errors in syntax, morphology and orthography, which is difficult to understand.	3
Assignment points only give half or 1–6 sentences.	2
Some syntax, morphological and orthographic errors are very difficult to understand. At assignment points only give 1–3 sentences.	1
No answer on assignment points	0

The criteria for German writing skills according to [4], include *Berücksichtigung der Leitpunkte*, *kommunikative Gestaltung* and *formale* Richtigkeit. *Berücksichtigung der Leitpunkte*, is an assessment of the suitability of the contents of the paragraph between the opening and closing sentences. *Gestaltung* Communicative Assessment, which is an assessment of students' skills in making communicative writing, as well as the existence of cohesion and coherence between paragraphs. *Richtigkeit* Formal Assessment, namely the grammar used by students and students' understanding and applying the structure and grammar of the German language. The assessment criteria can be seen in the following Table 2.

2.2 Writing (Schreiben)

Writing is clearly a complex process and competent writing is frequently accepted as being the last language skill to be acquired (for native speaker of the language or the second language learns [5].

This statement is confirmed [6] which states that writing activity is a language skill that is most recently mastered by language learners after listening, speaking and reading skills. Compared to the other three language skills, writing skills are more difficult to master even for native speakers of the language concerned.

In learning German, according to [7] writing is divided into *Schreiben als Zielfertigkeit* (writing is intended as a goal) and *Schreiben als Mittlerfertigkeit* (*Schreiben ist nur Mittel für einen anderen Zweck* (writing as a means to achieve other goals). Example from *Schreiben ist das Ziel*: z.B. im Brief is in the mail, while *Schreiben als Mittlerfertigkeit z.B. in den schriftlichen Grammatikübungen* (writing as a tool to achieve other goals, for example in grammar exercises in written form). Writing can also be said as a product (*Schreiben als Produkt*), writing as a process (*Schreiben als Prozess*) and writing as a methodical concept (*Schreiben als methodisches Konzept*).

Der Schreiblernprozess setzt erst nach dem Lernprozess ein und benötigt einen viel längeren Lernzeitraum (Writing lessons are done after learning other skills).

If the learning material is in the form of *Lesetext*, then reading learning must first be carried out, after that only writing learning is carried out. In this case, the writing process functions as *Mittlerfertigkeit*, as a medium for training/mastering vocabulary, grammar or understanding the content of the discourse that is read. And as a writing task as *Zielfertigkeit*, for example, students are asked to write an answer letter [8].

2.3 Error Analyzis

A learners errors are significant (that) they provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in the discovery of the language [9]. Error analysis is a process or technique to analyze the errors experienced by students in using a language.

Furthermore [10] said that error analysis is an analysis of a student's language errors, both foreign languages, second languages and languages in general. Error analysis provides three advantages, namely: (1) lecturers know how far the learning objectives have been achieved, (2) error analysis also provides data and evidence of how students learn and what strategies they use, and (3) mistakes they make can also be sources or materials or material for the next study which in turn students know and understand what is right and what is wrong.

2.4 Letter (Der Brief)

According to [11] letters are official or personal communication tools to convey messages or information to certain people, institutions, organizations, or companies using paper as the medium. Letters are a means to convey one's thoughts, feelings, intentions or desires to others through written language using paper as the medium [12].

In terms of form, content, and language, according to [13] letters can be classified into three types, such as: (1) personal letters, (2) official letters, and (3) commercial letters.

Personal letter is a letter containing personal matters sent by someone to family members, colleagues, or people who are well known personally [14]. With a letter, one does not need to meet directly with the party concerned.

So it can be concluded that letters are one of the written communication media between individuals and other individuals or between institutions and other institutions that aim to convey messages or news about something using writing and paper as the medium. Writing a good letter must meet the requirements of a letter that has been determined.

In a personal letter there are several parts. Part of a personal letter in the format of writing a letter in German according to [15] must contain the following elements: (1) *Ort, Datum* (place, date), (2) *Anrede* (greetings), (3) *Einleitungssatz* (opening sentence), (4) *Brieftext* (content of the letter), (5) *Schlusssatz* (closing sentence), (6) *Gruβ* (greetings), (7) *Unterschrift* (signature).

3 Method

3.1 Type of Research

This research is a qualitative descriptive study. According to [16] descriptive research is research that is used to describe and answer the problem of a phenomenon or event that is currently happening. Qualitative research is research that intends to understand phenomena about what is experienced by research subjects, such as perceptions, motivations, actions, etc. Descriptive approach is used to describe what mistakes students make in writing letters.

In addition, a qualitative approach is used to find out the location of the errors made. Thus, the qualitative descriptive is a representative picture of the mistakes made by students in writing letters.

3.2 Data

The data of this study are all words, sentences that contain errors based on the GER assessment criteria.

3.3 Data Source

The data sources for this research are 25 texts of personal letters from students in the *Schriftlicher Ausdruck* course with the theme *Freizeit*.

3.4 Data Collection Technique

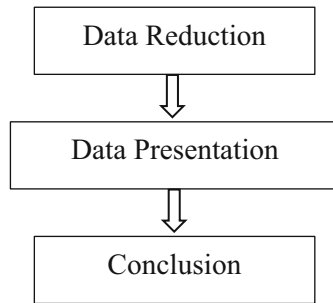Data collection in this study is a note-taking technique.

Fig. 1. Data Analysis Technique

3.5 *Data Analysis Technique*

The data analysis technique used in this research is descriptive qualitative analysis. There are 3 stages of methods, namely Data Reduction Stage, Data Presentation Stage and Conclution Stage at Fig. 1.

At the Data Reduction Stage, there are steps (1) read a personal letter in German written by students to find the elements of a personal letter, (2) record errors in the elements of a personal letter (3) identify errors in the elements of a personal letter.

The Steps at the Data Presentation Stage are (1) classify errors in the elements of a personal letter (2) describe and describe errors in the elements of a personal letter.

The steps for making conclusions are (1) making conclusions as a result of the research findings, (2) checking the validity of the data.

4 Result and discussion

The research was conducted to find out the problems experienced by students in writing personal letters in German. This research was conducted in the *Schriftlicher Ausdruck* course which consisted of 25 students. This research was conducted on Tuesday, March 29, 2022. The theme of the personal letter is related to *Freizeit*. Based on the results of the analysis found problems faced by students in writing personal letters.

Problems experienced by students in deciphering the main ideas (*Berücksichtigung der Leitpunkte*) in writing personal letters. This aspect concerns the suitability of the written theme items. In the *Berücksichtigung der Leitpunkte* aspect, the demand is the discussion of four *Leitpunkte*, but the results found from the 25 letters are only 9 letters or 36% which discuss all *Leitpunkte*/main thoughts correctly both in terms of content and scope, while 16 letters or 64% are discussed less of the four *Leitpunkte*. This proves that more than half of students have problems in writing Leitpunke.

Furthermore, based on sentence coherence (*Kommunikative Gestaltung*) in personal letters, namely aspects that involve demanding communicative writing, namely the existence of cohesion and coherence between sentences. In the Communicative Gestaltung aspect, there are 12 letters or 48% coherence between sentences that are well made and can be understood well, while 52%, in some parts there are systematic jumps and sentence coherence, some sentences can still be understood, but there are also those that
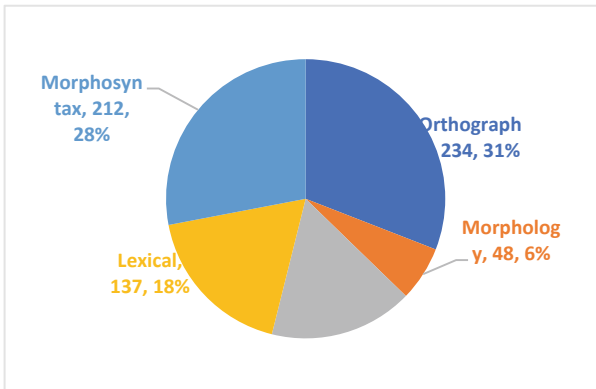
Fig. 2. *Formale Richtigkeit* Aspects

interfere with understanding. The problem that arises is not using connecting words to be able to string between sentences. The absence of these conjunctions causes the contents of the letter to be less readable and feel awkward.

Judging from the *Formale Richtigkeit* aspect, namely aspects concerning syntactic, morphosyntactic, morphology and orthographic errors, it was found that the types of problems related to the fields of Morphology, Morphosyntax, Syntax, Orthography/Interpunkten were found.

The data from the analysis of problems in the *Formale Richtigkeit* aspect can be classified into types of errors, which can be seen in the image below at Fig. 2.

In the *Formale Richtigkeit* aspect, the results showed that there were 757 errors consisting of: (1) errors in the morphological aspect amounted to 48 (6.3%) as in word merging errors, (2) morphosyntactic errors as many as 212 (28%) including errors 111 verb conjugations, and 101 declination errors, (3) in the syntactic aspect there were 126 errors (16.6%), including errors in the layout of sentence elements in the sentence, (4) errors in the lexical aspect totaling 137 (18.1%) consisting of 49 noun selection errors, 26 verb selection errors, 21 adjective selection errors, 19 preposition errors and 22 conjunctions selection errors, (5) on the orthographic aspect as many as 234 (31%) errors include errors in writing uppercase and lowercase 121 errors, 74 errors in writing punctuation marks, 16 items in writing Umlaut errors, 10 splits, writing errors in declination 13. There are several reasons why students have problems writing personal letters.

5   Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis in the previous discussion, there are several conclusions that can be drawn in this study from the 25 letters written by students in this study. The research found three aspects of students' problems in writing personal letters, namely (1) *Berücksichtigung der Leitpunkte* (2) *Kommunikative Gestaltung* and (3) *Formale Richtigkeit*.

The problem found is that they cannot develop their ideas when writing. One main idea can only be described in one sentence.

The problem that arises is not being able to string together sentences between main ideas.

Many errors made in the three aspects of errors found in this study were caused by a lack of knowledge of German grammar and vocabulary. The results of the study can be used as a reference by other researchers who discuss the types and causes of German grammatical errors.

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