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Language is an important factor in our life. To understand and to be understood by human being, we need language for communication. Language is universal. All normal human beings in a community understand to speak well enough to carry out every human life.<sup>1</sup>

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One of international languages that are spoken by many people all around the world and learned by most people in many countries either as first language or as second language (foreign language) is English.

Learning English as foreign language should fulfill four the language skills. Learning English usually aims to master four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.<sup>2</sup> Writing, especially grammar is one of problem faced by students in learning English. Some students still get confused in making English sentence correctly. Therefore, mastering grammar influences the students' ability in English.

Grammar is English component to support the mastery of those skills. The grammar is a description of how the English behaves and so on. A.S. Hornby stated, "Grammar is a study of science of rules for combination of words into sentences (syntax) and the form of words (morphology)."<sup>3</sup>

Everybody has to communicate with a great variety of people and in various circumstances. Knowledge of grammar helps us to choose and to use the forms of language best suited to each other particular situation.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, grammatical sentence is easier understood by interlocutors than ungrammatical

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<sup>2</sup> H. G. Widowson, *Teaching Language as Communication*, (New York: Edinourgh, 1977), p.1

<sup>3</sup> A. S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English Fifth Edition*, (New York: University Press, 1995), p.375

<sup>4</sup> Burton, *Mastering English Language*, (Boston: The Macmillan Press LTD, 1982), p. 128-129

ones, it is impossible to speak or to write English correctly without understanding the grammar of language.

One aspect of grammar is degree of comparison. It is part of grammar and it is also a basic knowledge of English that should be mastered. Thus, it is introduced to students since beginning level and it's important for students to have ability in degree of comparison to support students' skill in English.

In English grammar the degrees of comparison of an adjective or adverb describes the relational value of one thing with something in another clause of a sentence. An adjective may simply describe a quality, (the positive); it may compare the quality with that of another of its kind (comparative degree); and it may compare the quality with many or all others (superlative degree). The degree of comparison may be expressed morphologically, or syntactically. In English, for example, most monosyllabic and some disyllabic adjectives have morphological degrees of comparison: green (positive), greener (comparative), greenest (superlative); pretty, prettier, prettiest; while most polysyllabic adjectives use syntax: complex, more complex, most complex.<sup>5</sup>

Well, like the other school at Junior High School Muhammadiyah 4 Banjarmasin, English is one of subject that must be learned by all students there. They also learn all aspect of grammar that can support four skills in English and degree of comparison is included in grammar that must be learned by them.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Degree\\_of\\_comparison](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Degree_of_comparison). accessed in december 2009

According to the English teacher at Junior High School Muhammadiyah 4 Banjarmasin, students of eighth grade has learned about degree of comparison in seventh grade, especially in positive and comparative form. But for superlative form, they have just learned in the beginning of teaching learning in eighth grade. So, the little bit difficult to make different between comparative and superlative.

Based on that fact, the writer is interested to know further about the ability of students in degree of comparisons. Therefore, the writer conducts a research entitled: Students' Ability in Using Degree of Comparisons of Eighth Grade Students at Junior High School Muhammadiyah 4 Banjarmasin Academic Year 2009/2010.

To avoid misinterpretation toward the title, the writer will explain some terms in the title as follow:

1. Ability is the mental of physical capacity, power or skill required to do something.<sup>6</sup> Ability here means the capability of students in using degree of comparisons.
2. Using the writer means here is the student's way to apply degree of comparison in English sentence based on the grammatical structure.
3. Degree of comparison means "kata sifat" (adjective) and "kata keterangan" (adverb) that has some degrees in quantity and quality.

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<sup>6</sup> A.S. Hornby, *Op.Cit.* p. 2

**B. Statement of the Problem**

How is Students' Ability in Using Degree of Comparisons of Eighth Grade Students at Junior High School Muhammadiyah 4 Banjarmasin Academic Year 2009/2010?

**C. Reason for Choosing the Title**

Some reasons that the writer interested to choose this title are as follow:

1. Grammar is one of the important components in learning English. By knowing the correct grammar especially, degree of comparisons, it can help us to choose and to use the forms of language best suited to each other particular situation.
2. By learning degree of comparison, students will know the modification or inflection of an adjective or adverb to indicate the positive, comparative, and superlative degree. So, they can use all kinds of degree of comparison to compare one thing to another.
3. People often compare one thing to another in daily conversation, for example, my hair is longer than you. So, if the students do not really know the change of adjective they use in using comparative, listener will be difficult to understand what they talk about. Thus, it's important to have good ability in using degree of comparison for students, especially students in Junior High school.

#### **D. The Purpose of the Research**

To know students' Ability in Using Degree of Comparisons of Eighth Grade Students at Junior High School Muhammadiyah 4 Banjarmasin Academic Year 2009/2010

#### **E. Significance of Research**

Significances of this research are:

1. It will enlarge and improve writer's understanding about grammar in learning English especially in degree of comparisons.
2. The result of this research will be a good contribution for the school and the faculty to know student's ability in grammar especially in using degree of comparison at Junior High School Muhammadiyah 4 Banjarmasin.
3. Additional reference for library of institute and faculty about using degree of comparison at Junior High School Muhammadiyah 4 Banjarmasin.
4. As far the writer knows, this research has never been done before in Junior High School Muhammadiyah 4 Banjarmasin.

#### **F. Organization of the Contents**

This thesis is divided into five chapters as follows:

The first chapter contains introduction, which consist of rationale, formulation of the problem, reason for choosing the title, purpose of the research, significances of the research, and organization of the contents.

The second chapter contains theoretical review, which consists of the definition of degree of comparisons, adjective degree of comparison, adverb degree of comparison, other comparison form.

The third chapter contains method of research, which is consist of subject and object, data, source of the data, and the technique of data collecting, design of measurement, techniques of data processing and analysis, and research procedure.

The fourth chapter contains report of research, which consist of general description of the research location, data presentation, and data analysis.

The fifth chapter contains closure, which consists of conclusion and suggestion.