



Analyzing Tenth-Grade Students' Difficulties on Writing Descriptive Text at SMAN 1 Baros

Salma Nafisatur Ruwaida¹, Meisya², Khoirunnisa Fauziah³, Rijal Abdillah Tsani⁴, Ika Handayani⁵, Rini Khairunnisa Usman⁶

^{1,2,3,4}Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa

Abstract

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The focus of this study was to investigate the difficulties that arise in producing descriptive text for grade X (tenth) students at SMAN 1 Baros Serang. The researchers employ a qualitative descriptive research approach. Data is gathered utilizing three research instruments: observation, interviews, and tests (students' work). As research participants, 42 students from the X7 class of SMAN 1 Baros were employed. During data analysis, students' writing challenges are identified and divided into writing factors based on Jacobs' theory. Meanwhile, data collection, namely observation, was carried out by collecting tasks, field notes, photos, recordings, and papers. According to the findings, the three major writing difficulty aspects experienced by students are grammar, vocabulary, and mechanism. Students find grammar to be the most difficult aspect of writing a description text, while content is the easiest. According to the data, the factor causing students' difficulties in writing descriptive texts is that they have no much knowledge and any experience about learning English from their previous education, resulting in a lack of knowledge and mastery of vocabulary, as well as students' low motivation to learn English.

Kata kunci: *difficulty, writing, descriptive text*

(*) Corresponding Author: 1salmanafisar@gmail.com,

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INTRODUCTION

Descriptive writing is a type of text encountered by students in the first year of their high school. Descriptive text refers to written content that provides a detailed account or portrayal of both animate and inanimate entities. The objective of this text is to provide a description of the attributes of individuals, objects, animals, and locations to the intended audience (Anderson & Kathy, 1998).

The proficiency in writing descriptive writing is a crucial skill in the field of education, particularly for students in the tenth grade. The utilization of descriptive text in educational settings supports the enhancement of students' language skills and self-expressive capabilities, while concurrently developing their abilities for effectively and vividly communicating information. Nevertheless, it is not unusual for students to encounter various challenges while writing descriptive text.

Prior research have been conducted on the subject of students' challenges in composing descriptive texts. One study conducted by Divani et, al. (2018) The purpose of this study is to analyze the tenth-grade student's ability to compose



descriptive text at MA Salafiyah As-Syafi'iyah located in Simorejo village, Kanor. The result of the study found that the main challenges faced by students are related to grammar and vocabulary, while they display better ability in content, organization, and mechanical elements. The students' diminished enthusiasm towards acquiring proficiency in the English language, along with the perception that English is a challenging subject, are significant factors that contribute to their struggles in writing descriptive text.

Based on the previous study, the researcher in this study decided to conduct a similar study utilizing a qualitative descriptive method to investigate the nature of the student's difficulties in writing descriptive text. The data collection tools included observations, interviews, and tests. The participants in the study were tenth-grade students from class X7 at SMAN 1 Baros in the Academic Year 2023/2024, totaling 42 students. The data analysis process involved data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion.

This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the challenges often encountered by tenth-grade students in composing descriptive writings, along with potential strategies for surmounting these obstacles. This study is anticipated to provide useful insights to teachers in facilitating the enhancement of students' writing abilities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Writing

Writing is one of the language skills in English. Studying writing is crucial since it's seen as a productive ability that involves employing symbols (spaces, punctuation, and alphabet) to convey ideas enough for a paragraph. To put it simply, writing is a kind of communication that authors use to convey and express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. According to Nunan (2003), writing is the process of organizing words, phrases, and sentences. On the other hand, Leo (2007) said that writing should be done at our own pace as a way to put ideas or thoughts into words.

The Process of Writing

The phase before starting to write is called the writing process. The writing process, as defined by Harmer (2004, p. 13), is a means of examining what individuals do when they create written texts. The writing process has four components, according to Harmer (2004, pp. 4-6). These include the following: planning, drafting, editing (including revisions), and finalization.

Definition of Descriptive Text

Descriptive text is one of several text forms used in education. Generally, items like people, objects, and other things are described in this kind of writing. According to Kosasih (2006, p. 26), descriptive texts are essays that describe an object to give the reader the impression that they saw the object for themselves. On the other hand, Mahsun (2014, p. 28) defines descriptive texts as texts with the social purpose of individually describing an object or objects based on their physical characteristics. "The genres of describing are one of the fundamental functions of any language system and one of the first skills emergent language users

learn to control" (Knapp & Watkins, 2005, p. 95). According to them, descriptions also make it possible to "categorize or classify an almost infinite range of experiences, observations, and interactions into a system that orders them either objectively or subjectively depending on the learning area or writer's intent". Another type of descriptive text is that which describes or illustrates an idea the writer intends to convey in a way that makes the reader or listener feel as though they have personally experienced the subject matter being addressed.

Generic Structure Of Descriptive Text

Derewianka (1990), Butt (2000), Gerot & Wignell (1994), Knapp and Watkins (2005, p. 149), Nafisah and Kurniawan (2007, p. 15), Emilia & Christie, (2013, p. 63) state that for a text to be classified as a descriptive text, it must have the following two elements: the description element and the identification or general statement. Below is a discussion of the descriptive text's schematic structure in more detail.

- The purpose of the identification element is to present and identify a particular participant (a person, object, location, animal, or event) that will be discussed in the descriptive text. (Gerot & Wignell, 1994); (Knapp & Watkins, 2005); (Nafisah & Kurniawan, 2007, p. 15); (Emilia & Christie, 2013, p. 36).
- The purpose of the description is to provide a detailed account of each participant in the text. It describes the particular participant's traits, appearance, behavior, habits, or other attributes to provide descriptive data or information about them. (Gerot & Wignell, 1994); (Knapp & Watkins, 2005); (Nafisah & Kurniawan, 2007, p. 15); (Emilia & Christie, 2013, p. 36).

Language Features of Descriptive Text

Gerot and Wignell (1994), Emilia and Christie (2013), Knapp and Watkins (2005), Derewianka (1990), and Nafisah and Kurniawan (2007) list the following language features that are used in descriptive texts:

- 1) Focus on specific participants as the main characters;
- 2) As the dominating tenses, use the present tense;
- 3) When categorizing and describing the appearance, characteristics, and components or functions of phenomena, use linking verbs or relational processes (is, are, has, have, belongs to);
- 4) When providing extra details on the actions and behaviors carried out by the individuals in the text, use action verbs or the material and behavioral processes;
- 5) Employ mental processes or mental verbs to express your emotions;
- 6) When describing, use nominal groups frequently;
- 7) Add information to nouns and verbs with the help of adjectives and adverbs to give a more thorough description of the subject;
- 8) Adverbial phrases can be used to provide additional details concerning method, place, or time. They can also be realized in embedded clauses, which serve as conditions in certain cases.

Students' Challenges While Writing Descriptive Text

The majority of students believe that writing is challenging when they practice in class. The reason for this is that certain elements, such as grammar, spelling, punctuation, and vocabulary, are crucial while writing. Students often find it difficult to write texts, yet creating descriptive texts is one of the many types of texts they are learning in the tenth grade of Senior High School. The students should focus more on an object's details that are stated using proper language. Aside from that, it will be difficult for students who are fluent in two or three languages in their surroundings, particularly in Indonesia, where English is not taught as a first or even second language. In addition, the researchers discovered that due to curricular variations, English was not taught at the Elementary School level and that students studying English for the Tenth-Grade began at Junior High School rather than Kindergarten or Elementary School. Students who are not particularly familiar with English may also be affected by this aspect.

When doing teaching practice with High School students particularly those in Tenth-Grade the researchers noticed another case in which the students were confused about what they needed to write and explain. Because they lack concepts when asked to explain things, they are unable to provide detailed descriptions of persons, locations, or items. The majority of them have trouble using possessive pronouns like "she/he" or "his/him/her." Instead of using "she is" when writing descriptive text, they instead use "her is" to refer to the owner of the thing being described, or vice versa. The researcher can observe that these students' grammatical skills remain weak from this point on. Grammar issues will affect certain word combinations that are used to create the right phrases (Lailatul Husna, Zainil, Yenni Rozimela, 2013). The basic simple present tense was a little challenging for the students to use. When elaborating on the concept in the simple present tense, the students made a few errors. It makes writing descriptive texts for the students challenging.

In addition, students' ability to write correctly is impacted by their continued lack of word comprehension. Lack of proficiency in text creation abilities, as seen by frequent spelling, capital and lower case letters, and punctuation mistakes. According to MacArthur and Graham in Wearmouth (2006), high-level planning and content production abilities are hampered by the amount of attention that must be paid to low-level skills. On the other hand, Farooq (2012) said that spelling is the ability to recognize a word whether it is spoken or written. Because spelling and decoding are closely related, kids who struggle with spelling must commit word spellings to memory.

The researchers additionally found that some students weren't able to understand the meaning and content of the material since they just copied the examples of descriptive text that they accessed on their mobile devices rather than reading them first. They copy and paste from the internet because they are unable to write descriptive text in their own writing.

METHODS

In this study, the researcher utilized qualitative descriptive as a method of study, while observation, interview, and test were used as a tool to collect the data.

In order to gain the purpose of the qualitative descriptive method which is to study more about the nature of the phenomenon, such as the students' difficulties in writing descriptive text. Hence, the researcher collects the data by interviewing the teacher and students of class X7. Meanwhile, the data collection namely observation will be done by collecting the tasks, field notes, images, records, and papers. In this case, it is known that qualitative research is a technique for examining the events of a group of people in a systematic, factual, and accurate phenomenon being investigated (Agustin, Norahmi, and Asi 2022).

Thus, the researcher used tenth-grade students from class X7 at SMAN 1 Baros in Academic Year 2023/2024 as the participants of this study. The total number of samples were 32 students. The specific analysis of data was selected from all the 32 written English task of descriptive text. The tenth-grade students' of class X7 on writing a descriptive text, along with the interview with the students and teachers are included as the data collected by the researcher for this study. Besides, the data is collected by observation, documentation, and interview. A documentation and question listed are used as an instrument in this study. For interview, the researcher will use field note as the data collection technique during the responder asked questions in the interview session to know the students' trouble in composing descriptive text. In documentation, the researcher used documentation checklist to document the student's sheet.

The data analysis of this study is based on the objective of the study, such as finding out the students' difficulties in writing descriptive text. The following are the data analysis; data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion. First, in the data collection, researcher gather the data by utilizing observation, interview and documentation. For data reduction, the researcher selects, focus, abstracting, transformation rough data which is in the field directly. Then, the researcher collects the students' English notebook for writing descriptive text, investigate the students' difficulty in producing descriptive text, and analysed it. By analyzing them, it assists the researcher in selecting a group of students who has an issue in facing difficulty of writing descriptive text. Those students are interviewed by the researcher for the researcher to know the various factors which deals with the students struggles in writing descriptive text. Hence, the final step in data analysis is conclusion. In this step, the researcher must comprehend and respond to anything that is investigated by knowing the patterns of cause and effect. Therefore, the researcher able to find the result and make a conclusion on students' difficulties in writing descriptive text.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Result

The main focus of this study is to investigate the students' difficulties in writing descriptive text. The researcher collected the data by observation on Wednesday, 27 September 2023, during English lesson at 14.00 p.m. to 15.30 p.m. Regarding to the researchers' observation, it is known that tenth-grade students of class X7 skill in writing were still under average. The researcher obtained that the students were finding difficulties in writing English sentences using the correct organization of descriptive text, such as identification, description, and conclusion.

Besides, they find difficulties in writing descriptive text since they were lack in vocabulary mastery, and lack in English grammar mastery.

In data collection, the researcher obtained the data by documentation on Wednesday, 10 October 2023. The researcher instructed the students about Descriptive Text, and asked them to write Descriptive Text about their Idol. By asking them to write descriptive text, it assists the researcher to investigate and analyse their difficulties in writing descriptive text. In obtaining the data, the researcher took 16 students' work writing descriptive text. This documentation is taken based on the students' low skill in writing descriptive text.

In addition with the text, the researcher found the students' results dealing with their difficulties in writing descriptive text. In this case, the researcher provided the data based on students' writing work. There are 5 main difficulties that students face in writing: organization, content, grammar, mechanism, and vocabulary. The following are the students' score in writing descriptive text.

Tabel 1.1 Students' Score in Writing Descriptive Text

No.	Name	Score					Total Score
		Organization	Content	Grammar	Mechanism	Vocabulary	
1.	HF	15	26	19	5	20	85
2.	MAR	15	26	19	5	20	85
3.	SMi	16	28	22	4	13	83
4.	O	16	28	22	4	13	83
5.	MRS	13	18	15	2	13	61
6.	SMh	13	18	15	2	13	61
7.	SAriawan	13	22	11	3	19	68
8.	SArifin	13	22	11	3	19	68
9.	RM	7	13	5	2	10	37
10.	NM	7	13	5	2	10	37
11.	WK	17	22	18	4	17	78
12.	P	17	22	18	4	17	78
13.	M. Irfan Fadilah	14	24	18	3	14	73
14.	AAR	14	24	18	3	14	73
15.	RN	18	27	19	5	17	86
16.	KNA	15	23	11	3	10	62
	Total:	223	356	246	54	293	1,118

Table 1.2 Table of Analysis Scale

No.	Aspect	Score	Level or Criteria
		30-27	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informative • Factual • Thesis development • Relevant to specified topic
		26-22	GOOD TO AVERAGE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some information of subject • Sufficient range • Limited thesis development • Primarily related to the topic but lacking in details
		21-17	FAIR TO POOR

1.	Content	16-13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient subject information • Minimal information Little substance • Insufficient topic development <p>VERY POOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not demonstrate information of subject • Non-informative • Irrelevant • Not enough to evaluate
		20-18	<p>EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressiveness • Ideas clearly stated/supported • Clear • Well-planned • Logical ordering • Consistent
		17-14	<p>GOOD TO AVERAGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A little sloppy • Loosely arranged yet main ideas stand out with minimal support
2.	Organization	13-10	<p>FAIR TO POOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate fluency • Confused or unconnected ideas • Lacks logical sequencing and advancement
		9-7	<p>VERY POOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No connection • No organization • Insufficient to evaluate
		20-18	<p>EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clever selections • effective word/idiom use and usage • suitable mastery of register word
		17-14	<p>GOOD TO AVERAGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sufficient range • Occasional word/idiom problems due to choice and usage, but the meaning is clear
3.	Vocabulary	13-10	<p>FAIR TO POOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restricted range • Some mistakes in word or idiom form, selection, and usage
		9-7	<p>VERY POOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily translation • Limited understanding of English vocabulary, idioms, and word form • Insufficient to evaluate

		25-22	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent complex construction • Few agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, and prepositional mistakes
		21-18	GOOD TO AVERAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective but basic design • Several faults of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, and propositions, but the meaning is seldom obscured
		17-11	FAIR TO POOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant issues in simple/complex construction include frequent mistakes in negation, agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions and/or fragments, run-ons, and deletions. • Confusion or obscurity of meaning
4.	Grammar	10-5	VERY POOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost no command of sentence construction norms. • Dominated by 15 mistakes • Does not connected • Is insufficient to evaluate
		5	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes command of conventions • Few spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing mistakes
		4	GOOD TO AVERAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occasional spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing issues but message is not obscured
5.	Mechanism	3	FAIR TO POOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing issues. • Weak handwriting • Confusion or obscurity of meaning
		2	VERY POOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No command of conventions • Spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing mistakes predominate • Handwriting is unreadable. • Insufficient for evaluation.

Based on table 1.1, it is known that students' have difficulty in writing descriptive text. The students' highest score is 86, the lowest is 37. This has proven that tenth-grade students have five difficulties in writing descriptive text, such as content, organization, vocabulary, language feature (grammar), and mechanism. Besides, the researcher found that students have difficulties in using capitalization, grammatical structure, spelling, commas, full stops, phrases, and punctuation.

However, table 1.2 shows the rubric of scoring which is used as an indicator for the first graders scoring in writing descriptive text.

Apart from observation and test, the researcher also collects the data by interviewing the students and English teacher. By interview, the researcher could obtain the data dealing with the factors and causes of students' difficulties in writing descriptive text. Based on the interview with the English teacher, it is known that first graders have difficulty in writing descriptive text because of various factors, such as the lack of students' motivation in learning, and students' lack of English vocabulary. Meanwhile, based on interview with the students', it is known that they have difficulties in writing descriptive text because they have no experience learning English language, especially descriptive text in their previous education. Also, they have a lack interest in comprehending English writing skill. As it is claim by Duha in (Syifa, Baekani, and Srisudarso 2022), the students find writing descriptive text difficult because they were bored with the teachers' teaching style and the students' found it difficult to understand the information about writing descriptive text, which makes their enthusiastic low. Moreover, students were still confused in using simple present tense, action verb, and adjective in the phrases of descriptive text. Most of them find writing skill as a difficult skill since they are not familiar in making English text like descriptive text, such as making main idea, identification, description, and concluding the paragraph of descriptive text.

Discussion

According to the result above, this study focused on five aspects of difficulties in writing descriptive text based on the analytical rubric score by Tribble in his book "Language Teaching Writing", including organization, content, grammar, mechanism, and vocabulary. These five aspects are important since it assist in improving students' writing skill. As we know that writing is a productive skill besides speaking and a process of expressing ideas, thoughts, and feelings of the writer by using a conventional system (Jeremy Harmer, 1998). In writing, many students find it a difficult skill because they did not understand how to find and develop ideas. O'Donnell in Nabeela, claims that pupils perform less carefully, and learning difficulties are another problem which affects students' skill in writing. Some students are known to have diverse spelling styles, handwriting, and unstructured writing.

Besides, first graders difficulty in writing is the organization of writing. According to Marsaleno Agustin, Maida Norahmi, and Natalina Asi (2022) research entitled "An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Writing Descriptive Texts in the Tenth Grade of SMA Kristen Palangka Raya", there are a few factors causing students difficulties in writing descriptive text, such as (1) the difficulties in generic structure. The students feel confused in making descriptions with the appropriate generic structure, and (2) the difficulties in grammar. The students could not arrange the word into a simple present tense. Based on table 1.1, a few students were struggling in creating ideas, making main idea, and making a structured sentence. Also, some of them could not organize their sentence into a paragraph, such as identification, description, and conclusion. Meanwhile, they only make a repeating sequence sentence. For example, they usually begin the sentence with He or She to describe their Idol's physical appearance, instead of

using other beginning sentences like The/It/etc. Overall, most of them could generate their sentence into a logic and structured sentence because they could express their ideas and make a clear sentence that can be followed by the reader. As it is claim by Wyrik in (Astrianingsih, 2021), in order for the readers to understand and visualize the person, location, or thing being described, the writer must be able to provide specific details about the subject of description. They must be choosing the right phrases to use when creating a descriptive text since a good phrases or words effects on how it delivers to the readers.

Content and grammar are another students' difficulty in writing descriptive text. In this study, most of the students find difficult in using grammar rather than the difficulty in content because they understand the teachers' explanation and comprehend what they have to write in descriptive text writing. It is mentioned by Afiani (2022), Irine & Misrita (2020), and Jenkins (2021), that pupils' has difficulty in writing descriptive text since they have a lack of interest in learning grammar and vocabulary, and they have a limited acquiring of English vocabulary which then it makes them difficult to read and translate words. Besides, Irine & Misrita (2020) argued that students find writing in English to be challenging because they are concerned with punctuation, spelling, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, structure, and other aspects which affects it.

Apart from content and grammar, mechanism and vocabulary are the other aspect of writing descriptive text which students' find it difficult. Yoandita (2018) stated that when challenged to produce descriptive text writing, students' encounter in creating it because they have a little knowledge and understanding in English vocabulary, they do not comprehend grammar, and they trouble in understanding the meaning of each word. Somehow, Zhihong in (Jayanti 2019) supports that words are the fundamental component of language form because without English vocabulary mastery, one could not communicate and express ideas effectively. Meanwhile, using the right mechanism in writing descriptive text is also important because it assist the students to write the correct phrases using the right punctuation and spelling. Nordquist (2011:1) explained that punctuation is a set of symbols used, mostly to separate or linking words, phrases, and clauses to organize texts and make their meanings clear. Oshima and Hogue (1991:245) supported that the use of correct punctuation is significant since it conveys meaning just as words do. However, the spelling indicates how the term appears. Incorrect spelling will create words that have no meaning.

It can be concluded that the use of aspects in writing descriptive text, such as organization, content, grammar, mechanism, and vocabulary is important because it help the readers to understand the content of the text or the information that is delivered by the writer. By studying English all of the aspects in writing needed to be acquired by the students in order to be able to make structured sentences, create main ideas, and make correct words that have meaning, especially in the ability to create sentences with the right spelling, punctuation, and grammar. By creating a clear, accurate, and comprehensible writing, it able to make the sentence of descriptive writing look interesting.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study revealed that students had difficulties in several aspects of composing descriptive writing. The examination of students' results indicated that the maximum score attained was 86, but the minimum score recorded was 37. The results of this study revealed that students had difficulties in several areas, including content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanism. The identified challenges included challenges in effectively structuring their written work, a limited knowledge of vocabulary, and problems in understanding grammar and language features.

Upon further analysis, it appeared that certain students had difficulties related to capitalization, grammatical structure, spelling, punctuation, and several other aspects of writing mechanics. The problems encountered by the participants in this study were identified via interviews. These challenges were found to be driven by the absence of enthusiasm, inadequate English vocabulary, and little previous background in learning the English language, specifically in the area of descriptive text writing. The role of students' lack of enthusiasm and engagement in the context of study corresponds with prior research results.

In summary, this study highlighted the importance of five fundamental elements when producing descriptive writings, namely: organization, content, grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary. Enhancing students writing abilities involves the consideration of these fundamental components. The practise of writing, seen as a productive ability, entails the capacity to proficiently develop, elaborate, and communicate ideas. The difficulties encountered by students in the organization of their written work and the use of correct grammar are especially significant. In addition, it was observed that the individual had limited knowledge of vocabulary and encountered challenges in the area of writing mechanics, including spelling and punctuation.

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