

**AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING RECOUNT TEXT
AT TENTH GRADE OF SMA NEGERI 7 MEDAN**

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify the difficulties faced by tenth-grade students in writing recount texts and to analyze the factors causing those difficulties. This research employed a qualitative descriptive method. The subjects of this study were tenth-grade students of SMA Negeri 7 Medan. The data were collected through writing tests and interviews. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that students experienced both linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties in writing recount texts. The linguistic difficulties included limited vocabulary, difficulties in using grammar (especially past tense), problems in organizing ideas, and difficulties in expressing ideas in written form. Meanwhile, the non-linguistic factors included lack of motivation and interest, low self-confidence, limited time allocation, lack of writing practice, lack of experience in writing personal events, and insufficient understanding of the teacher's explanation. Among those factors, vocabulary limitation and grammar (past tense) were the most dominant difficulties experienced by the students. These findings indicate that students need more practice, vocabulary enrichment, grammar reinforcement, and motivational support to improve their ability in writing recount texts.

Keywords: grammar difficulty; recount text; vocabulary limitation; writing difficulties; qualitative

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi kesulitan yang dialami oleh siswa kelas X dalam menulis teks recount serta menganalisis faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan kesulitan tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Subjek penelitian ini adalah siswa kelas X SMA Negeri 7 Medan. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes menulis dan wawancara. Data dianalisis menggunakan model analisis interaktif Miles dan Huberman yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa mengalami kesulitan linguistik dan non-linguistik dalam menulis teks recount. Kesulitan linguistik meliputi keterbatasan kosakata, kesulitan dalam penggunaan tata bahasa (terutama past tense), kesulitan dalam mengorganisasi ide, serta kesulitan dalam mengekspresikan gagasan ke dalam bentuk tulisan. Sementara itu, faktor non-linguistik meliputi kurangnya minat dan motivasi, rendahnya kepercayaan diri, keterbatasan waktu, kurangnya latihan menulis, kurangnya pengalaman dalam menulis pengalaman pribadi, serta kurangnya pemahaman terhadap penjelasan guru. Di antara faktor-faktor tersebut, keterbatasan kosakata dan kesulitan tata bahasa (past tense) merupakan faktor yang paling dominan dialami siswa. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa siswa memerlukan lebih banyak latihan menulis, pengayaan kosakata, penguatan tata bahasa, serta dukungan motivasi untuk meningkatkan kemampuan mereka dalam menulis teks recount.

Keywords: kesulitan tata bahasa; teks recount; keterbatasan kosakata; kesulitan menulis; penelitian kual

1. PENDAHULUAN

Background of the Study

The English language is a foreign language. English is an essential part of education because it is an international language used by many people worldwide. According to Sipayung (2021), English is rapidly gaining status as a global language because it is the easiest way to communicate with people from other countries about aspects of human life, such as education, science, business, technology, and culture, and is also widely used by Indonesian people. In response to this, English is therefore essential to master in Indonesia.

According to the English curriculum, learners should master four language skills. The four language skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening is an active activity that involves receiving, deciphering, and perceiving a message with the intent to respond. Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. Reading is the process of extracting meaning from a written or printed text. Then, writing is a skill that teaches how to express the writer's ideas in written form, involving the mastery of all elements of the target language, namely grammar, content, organization, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics. Writing needs a complex process. Consequently, the students may have difficulties doing so. Writing requires many devices, such as the use of complex Grammatical devices, stylistic skill, mechanical skill, a careful choice of vocabulary, and judgment skill (Heaton,

1990). One of the skills that the writer focuses on in this research is writing. Writing is arranging something in written.

form. Writing is, in fact, a transaction with words where you free yourself from what you presently think, feel, and perceive (Brown, 2006). It is one of the skills that usually becomes hard, not only for elementary school students but also for senior high school students. As Scott and Ytreberg (1990) stated, "writing is not always easy." Teaching writing requires extra preparation to engage students in the writing activity, and learning to write is not easy because there are mechanics of writing that make students afraid of writing.

Writing is regarded as the most challenging of the four skills for students to master. Such a condition is frequently evident when students write in English; many learners still make various errors in their essays. It also indicates that not all students can convey their thoughts and ideas clearly in writing. In writing, students have to know vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, sentence sequence, and sentence connection (Christina, 2021). Many students face difficulties in writing, including writing a recount text. This is caused by many factors, such as difficulty remembering word forms or spellings, which often leads to spelling mistakes or confusion when spelling words, feeling that writing is tiring, lack of interest in writing activities, or feeling that writing is pointless, difficulty organizing ideas in the head into structured writing, and lack of understanding of the story theme or concept to be written (Harris, 2014).

In general, writing difficulties refer to obstacles or constraints students encounter when expressing ideas and information in writing. According to

Heaton (1990), difficulties in writing arise because writing is a complex skill that requires not only linguistic ability but also cognitive ability. Heaton explains that several key aspects can cause students to have difficulty writing: grammar, content 3 Development, organization of ideas, vocabulary, and writing mechanics such as spelling and punctuation. If any of these aspects is not well mastered, students will experience obstacles in producing coherent, structured, and easily understandable writing.

These difficulties were also encountered in the field during implementation of the program (Magang Kependidikan) at SMA Negeri 7 in Medan, where data were collected in the form of student writing samples, specifically recount texts. During the internship, several challenges were observed in the students' writing skills. Many students demonstrated a limited understanding of the generic structure of recount texts, resulting in poorly organized paragraphs that did not clearly distinguish between the orientation, sequence of events, and reorientation sections. In addition, students often made grammatical errors, particularly in the use of the simple past tense, irregular verbs, and sentence structure. Students also struggle to choose vocabulary. Limited vocabulary prevents them from expressing their ideas accurately, so the words they choose tend to be repetitive, inappropriate, or inaccurate. In addition, many students have difficulty developing ideas; some are unable to write independently without relying on the teacher's examples. As a result, the recount texts they produce tend to lack detail, be incoherent, and fail to follow a logical chronological order. In addition to linguistic problems, mechanical problems such as spelling and punctuation errors

were also found. Errors in spelling common words and inconsistent use of punctuation often interfere with the clarity and readability of their writing. These mechanical problems indicate that students have not fully 4 mastered the basic conventions of writing. Another challenge observed during the internship was related to student motivation. Some students seemed less enthusiastic about writing activities and put little effort into revising or improving their drafts. Low motivation resulted in some writings being incomplete, too short, or carelessly written. Classroom dynamics also affected students' writing abilities; in large classes, it was difficult to provide individualized feedback, and some students were reluctant to ask questions or seek clarification, which led to their writing difficulties persisting

2. KAJIAN TEORI

Theoretical Framework This chapter presents the literature review and explains the related material. It consists of the definition of writing, the purpose of writing, elements (content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, mechanics), the writing process, the definition of text and text genres, recount texts, the general structure of recount texts, and the difficulties students encounter in writing. Some opinions are needed to explain concepts or terms used in the research. This study uses Heaton's (1990) theory as its primary foundation and Hughes's (2003) theory as a supporting theory. According to Heaton (1990), in *Writing English Language Tests*, writing skills include five main components: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. These five components form the basis for assessing students' writing skills and for identifying the difficulties students experience in writing recount texts

Furthermore, Hughes' (2003) theory in Testing for Language Teachers supports Heaton's theory by emphasizing that writing difficulties are not only caused by linguistic weaknesses, but also by cognitive and psychological factors, such as lack of ideas, low motivation, and fear of making mistakes. Heaton's theory is employed to analyze the types of students' writing difficulties based on the five components of writing. In contrast, Hughes's theory is used to explain the causes of these difficulties, both linguistic and non-linguistic

The Definition of Writing Writing is one of the skills that students must master. In this era, English is one of the most important international languages to learn. According to Brown (2006), "writing is important in our lives and as a communicative act that transmit information and link people together". It means we can communicate with others in English. It will make it easier for us to communicate with others if we master English. Writing skills play a role in helping students develop their English. Harmer (2001) states that the importance given to writing differs from teaching situation to teaching situation.

In some cases, it shares equal billing with the other skills, where students write about their learning of the language's grammar and vocabulary. It means that students can do writing activities to improve their English. Writing should become familiar to students in their daily lives, as they use it to complete many tasks in their studies. Writing practice can help students to improve their vocabulary and increase their ability in grammar skills.

With this view, Roymond (2012) argues that writing is more than a medium of communication. It is a way of remembering

and a way of thinking as well. Writing makes words permanent and thus expands the collective memory of human beings from the relatively small store that we can remember and pass on orally to the infinite capacity of a modern library. By communicating in English, students automatically develop their speaking and writing skills.

Genre of Writing Learning about writing is learning about genres. According to Pardiyono (2016), there are 12 genres: Narrative, Recount, Descriptive, Report, Discussion, Explanation, Analytical Exposition, Procedure, Anecdote, Hortatory Exposition, Spoof, and News Item.

1. Narrative Narrative is to amuse, entertain, and deal with actual or vicarious experience in different ways; Narrative deals with problematic events that lead to a crisis or turning point of some kind, which in turn finds a resolution. It tells stories, experiences, and actions that happened in the past. It uses the simple past tense.

2. Recount A recount is to retell events for the purpose of informing or entertaining. Theoretically, the technique of writing a recount text is like the way a narration is written. Structurally, a recount text contains three components: orientation, events, and reorientation.

3. METODOLOGI PENELITIAN

Research Design

The writer uses a qualitative descriptive research method in this study. Qualitative research focused on understanding phenomena naturally and holistically by describing them in words rather than numbers. Qualitative descriptive research was used when researchers aimed to

describe a particular phenomenon or process using language that was easily understood, without engaging in high-level interpretation as in phenomenology or grounded theory. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research was an inquiry process for understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, using words to report detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting.

The purpose of using qualitative descriptive methods was to obtain a detailed and in-depth description of students' difficulties in writing recount texts, based on the five components of writing proposed by Heaton content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. Therefore, this method was considered the most appropriate for analyzing the types and causes of difficulties that naturally arose in the classroom learning process. 40 41

3.2 Data and Source of Data

The primary data of this study were the students' complete recount texts written in full paragraphs. The texts were analysed as whole compositions to identify the types of difficulties encountered by the students and the factors contributing to those difficulties. The object of the study was directly related to the first research problem, that is identifying the types of difficulties experienced by students in writing recount texts. The analysis focused on writing components such as content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, and the generic structure of recount texts. In addition to identifying the types of difficulties, this study also examined various factors that contributed to the emergence of these difficulties, both internal factors (lack of vocabulary

mastery, poor understanding of grammar, or lack of writing experience) and external factors (teaching methods, lack of practice, or learning environment). The source of data in this study was the recount texts written by the students of Chairil Anwar's class, tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 7 Medan in the 2025/2026 academic year, comprising 30 students. The class was selected using purposive sampling, which involved selecting samples based on specific criteria. The class was selected using purposive sampling technique based on specific criteria. The criteria included: 1). the students had learned recount text material; 2). they had produced recount text writing assignments; 3). preliminary observation showed that students still experienced difficulties in writing recount texts; and 4). the English teacher recommended the class as representative for the research focus. In this case, the English teacher recommended one class that is Chairil Anwar's class, which showed a tendency to experience difficulties in 42 writing recount texts based on previous learning outcomes. The selection of this data source ensured that the data collected was relevant to the focus of the study, that is, to identify and analyze the real difficulties that were experienced in writing recount texts. The data source in this study was not only understood as participants, but also as key sources of information who provided data through their writing and interviews. By focusing on tenth-grade students, this study sought to gain a deeper understanding of the difficulties they experienced in writing, particularly in the recount text genre, which became an important part of English language learning in senior high school. The data and source of data in this study were closely related and supported the main objective of the study, which was to provide a comprehensive

description of the types of difficulties that were experienced by students in writing recount texts and the factors behind them. Therefore, the results of the study were expected to benefit teachers, students, and the writing learning process at SMA Negeri 7 Medan.

3.3 Instrument of Collecting Data Sugiyono (2017) stated that research instruments were tools used by the researcher to measure social or natural phenomena under investigation. These instruments included various data-collection tools, such as tests, questionnaires, interview guides, observation sheets, documentation, attitude scales, checklists, and other devices, all designed to meet the needs of the research. Each instrument served a different function in data collection; therefore, the researcher needed to select the most relevant instruments based on the study's 43 purpose and design. Although Sugiyono (2017) listed a wide range of possible instruments, not all of them were used in every research study. Instrument selection depended on the type of data required and the characteristics of the research. In this study, the researcher did not use all the instruments proposed by Sugiyono instead, only those relevant to the research focus were applied. Since this study aimed to analyze students' difficulties in writing recount texts, three main instruments were employed: a writing test, an interview, and documentation.

4. HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

Discussion

This section discusses the findings of the research by interpreting and comparing the results with previous studies. Based on the findings, students experienced difficulties in writing recount texts in terms

of content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. When these findings are compared with previous studies, there are similarities as well as reinforcing evidence.

In the aspect of content, this study found that students had difficulty developing their ideas in detail, as many of them wrote short and incomplete recount texts. This finding is in line with Ariani (2023), who found that students often fail to elaborate their experiences clearly. The similarity between these findings indicates that students generally lack practice in expressing ideas in written form, which affects their ability to produce detailed texts. In terms of organization, the findings of this study also show that students had difficulty arranging events chronologically and following the generic structure of recount 97 texts. This finding is consistent with Yulianawati (2018), who stated that students often do not understand the structure of recount texts, resulting in disorganized writing. This similarity suggests that students' understanding of text structure is still limited and needs further improvement. In the vocabulary aspect, this study found that students had limited vocabulary and tended to repeat the same words. This finding is also supported by Ariani (2023), which explains that limited vocabulary becomes a major obstacle in expressing ideas. This indicates that vocabulary mastery plays an important role in helping students develop their writing. Furthermore, in the aspect of grammar, this study found that students had difficulties in using the simple past tense and constructing correct sentences. This finding is in line with both Ariani (2023) and Yulianawati (2018), which found that grammar is one of the most common problems in writing recount texts. The

similarity of these findings shows that grammar remains a fundamental issue that affects students' writing ability. In addition, the findings in mechanics also show that students made errors in punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

Although this aspect is often considered minor, the findings indicate that students still lack attention to writing conventions, which is also reflected in previous studies. From the comparison above, it can be concluded that the findings of this study are generally in line with previous studies, as students experience similar difficulties in writing recount texts. There are no significant contradictory findings, but rather a reinforcement of previous research results. This means that the difficulties found in this study are not unique but are commonly experienced by students in learning English writing. 98

Furthermore, the interview results revealed that the causes of students' difficulties were influenced by linguistic and non-linguistic factors. This finding also strengthens previous studies which state that writing difficulties are not only caused by limited language ability, but also by factors such as lack of practice, low motivation, and low self-confidence. Therefore, both internal and external factors play an important role in shaping students' writing ability.

5. KESIMPULAN DAN SARAN

Conclusions

This study aimed to identify the types of students' difficulties in writing recount texts and to analyze the causes of those difficulties experienced by the tenth-grade students of SMA Negeri 7 Medan. The conclusions are drawn by referring to the research problems and the results

obtained from the analysis of students' writing and interview data. Based on the results of the research and discussion, the conclusions of this study are presented as follows:

1. The types of students' difficulties in writing recount texts among the tenth grade students at SMA Negeri 7 Medan are identified in five aspects of writing, that is content, organization, vocabulary, grammar (language use), and mechanics. In the aspect of content, students had difficulty developing their ideas and experiences in detail, resulting in incomplete and less informative texts. In terms of organization, students could not arrange their ideas according to the generic structure of recount texts, which consists of orientation, events, and re-orientation, so their writing was sometimes not coherent. In the vocabulary aspect, students showed limited vocabulary mastery, which affected their ability to express ideas clearly and appropriately. Furthermore, in the aspect of grammar, students experienced difficulties in using correct sentence structures, especially in the use of the simple past tense when describing past events. In addition, students also made errors in mechanics, such as punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. These difficulties indicate that 100 students still need improvement in several aspects of writing in order to produce well-structured and meaningful recount texts.

2. The causes of students' difficulties in writing recount texts were influenced by two main factors, that is Linguistic and Non-linguistic factors. Linguistic factors include students' difficulties in grammar, limited vocabulary mastery, and lack of understanding of the generic structure of recount texts. These factors made it difficult for students to construct correct sentences, choose appropriate words, and organize

their ideas effectively in writing. Meanwhile, Non-linguistic factors include lack of writing practice, low self-confidence, and lack of motivation in learning English. Some students were not accustomed to writing in English, which made them feel hesitant and unsure when expressing their ideas. In addition, limited practice and motivation also affected students' ability to develop their writing skills. Therefore, it can be concluded that students' difficulties in writing recount texts are not only caused by their limited language ability but also influenced by several external factors that affect the learning process. Both linguistic and non linguistic factors play an important role in shaping students' writing ability.

Suggestions

Based on the conclusions of this study, several suggestions are proposed to provide practical contributions for improving students' writing ability, particularly in writing recount text. These suggestions are addressed to students, English teachers, and future researchers. It is expected that the following recommendations can help overcome the difficulties identified in this study and support the development of more effective writing instruction and learning processes.

1. For Students Students are expected to be more active in improving their writing skills, especially in grammar and vocabulary mastery. Students need to practice writing recount texts more regularly so that they become accustomed to developing ideas and using correct language structures. In addition, students are also encouraged to improve their confidence in writing and not be afraid of making mistakes, because mistakes are part of the learning process.

2. For English Teachers English teachers are advised to provide more structured and continuous writing exercises, particularly in the use of the simple past tense and the development of ideas in recount texts. Teachers can also use more varied and interactive learning methods to increase student motivation and confidence. In addition, clear and constructive feedback is very important so that students understand their mistakes and can correct them.

3. For the Researcher This study still has limitations in terms of the number of participants and its focus on one type of text, namely recount text. Therefore, future researchers are advised to conduct studies with a broader scope, both in terms of the number of participants and the types of texts studied. In addition, future studies can develop effective learning strategies or models to overcome students' difficulties in writing.

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