



The Students' Problems in Writing Descriptive Text at Seventh Grade Students of Smp Negeri 3 Samarinda

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Chicago Manual of 17th edition (full note) Style Citation:

Suriyanti et al., "The Students' Problems in Writing Descriptive Text at Seventh Grade Students of SMP Negeri 3 Samarinda". *BENJOLE*, 2(1), 14-20.

Abstract

Writing skill is one of the abilities that students must be mastered. By writing, students can express ideas, opinions, and feelings. Based on the junior high school curriculum, several basic competencies students must achieve in writing English texts. The competencies to help students develop their skills and produce simple, functional written texts. Descriptive text is a basic competency that is difficult for students to learn. This is because students need help to pour writing ideas into a text. This research aimed to find out the problems of students in writing descriptive texts faced by seventh-grade students of SMP Negeri 3 Samarinda. This research uses descriptive qualitative methods. The researcher only took 2 classes out of a total of 9 classes, namely 7A and 7E, with a total of 69 students as subjects. The researcher used several instruments to collect the data: writing tests, questionnaires, and teacher interviews. The results of this research indicate that students need help writing descriptive texts in content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. However, from the results obtained, students' most significant problem in writing is a mechanical, organization, and vocabulary. From the results of the writing test, the average score of students was 47%, with scores of contents (141), organization (126), grammar (131), vocabulary (130), and mechanics (122). The questionnaire result showed that students who support this problem experience difficulties in mechanics, organization, and vocabulary, with a total score of 54.8%.

Keywords: Students' Problems, Writing, Descriptive Text

A. Introduction

A language is a tool for communicating. There are several forms of communication, spoken and written forms of language. The purpose of good communication is to convey the message of the writer or speaker to the reader or listener. English is one of the international languages in the world. In many countries, English is one of the subjects that study students as a foreign language¹. Many countries use English as a second language to communicate². Therefore, foreign languages are very important for all students in the world. One of them is Indonesia.

In learning English, there are four language skills that all students must master. They are listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Listening and reading are receptive skills and speaking and writing is productive skills. Writing is one of the language skills that must be mastered in addition to the other skills. Writing is very important³. Through writing, students can learn to communicate well in written form, especially in learning English.

Writing is expressing ideas using letters, words, art, or media. It requires a mental process in order to express ideas⁴. According to Harmer, writing is a way to produce language and express ideas, feelings, and opinions⁵. That is, writing is a way to produce a language work that comes from our minds in the form of ideas or opinions generated based on the activities of the author as outlined in the form of letters, words, art, or media, and is an activity, both physical and mental. It helps the writers put their creativities thoughts into words in a meaningful form⁶.

Based on the junior high school curriculum. The basic competence that must be achieved in writing English is that students can develop and produce simple, functional written texts such as narrative text, recount text, procedure text, report text, and descriptive text. They can use proper diction, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and organization well. Descriptive text is one type of text which is difficult enough to learn by the students.

According to Gerot & Wiknell, there are five significant lexicogrammatical features of Descriptive text. They focus on the specific participant, simple present tense, and the adjective describing, numbering, or classifying something⁷. Therefore, descriptive text is a type of writing that provides information to classify something or someone naturally so readers can feel it and imagine it.

In fact, in this case, writing is more difficult than other basic language skills. Writing continues to be one of the most difficult areas for teachers and English

¹ M F Patel and Praveen M Jain, *English Language Teaching* (Sunrise Publishers and Distributors, 2008).

² Anis Komariah, "Implementasi Extensive Reading Activity Dalam Pengajaran Mata Kuliah Reading Pada Mahasiswa IAIN Manado," *Tarbiyah Wa Ta'lim: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran*, 2021, 128–37.

³ Janet Lane and Ellen Lange, *Writing Clearly: An Editing Guide* (Heinle & Heinle Boston, 1999).

⁴ Anne Uusen, "Changing Teachers Attitude Towards Writing, Teaching Of Writing And Assessment Of Writing," *Problems of Education in the 21st Century* 10 (2009): 100.

⁵ Puput Septiani, "IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL BY USING FOUR SQUARE WRITING TECHNIQUE (A COLLABORATIVE CLASSROOM ACTION RESEARCH)" (UIN Raden Intan Lampung, 2018).

⁶ Rostanti Toba and Widya Noviana Noor, "The Current Issues of Indonesian EFL Students' Writing Skills: Ability, Problem, and Reason in Writing Comparison and Contrast Essay," *Dinamika Ilmu*, 2019, 57–73.

⁷ Linda Gerot and Peter Wignell, *Making Sense of Functional Grammar* (Citeseer, 1994).

learners to tackle because it covers some skills that the learners should master by the learners⁸. In Indonesia, many students still need help with this writing skill. The students' problems in writing English can be influenced by a lack of many vocabularies, grammar, and written exercises and ideas⁹. Sometimes students get stuck in writing because they feel bored and confused about what to write and lack ideas. According to Prayoga many students do not consider writing a leisurely and easy activity; writing often frustrates them. Because they lack adequate knowledge and skill, they are needed in writing. Therefore, some students feel that writing is not an easy skill.

At this time, learning has changed after the impact of the Covid-19 virus that has swept the world. One of them is Indonesia. Learning in schools has changed. Each school implements different regulations to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

Coronavirus is a virus that causes the infection of covid-19. The spread of covid-19 is increasing throughout Indonesia, with a total case of 1.26 million people infected covid-19; 1.07 million people have recovered, and 34,152 people died¹⁰. Due to Covid-19, the country is on lockdown, and after the end of the Covid-19 period, Indonesia reopened offices and schools while adhering to health protocols. After the end of the pandemic, the rules in every school changed. This situation will be a challenge for teachers in teaching in the classroom.

After the pandemic ends, teachers must prepare new strategies for a more effective learning situation. That is necessary to deal with student problems. In addition to implementing an appropriate health protocol system, a learning mechanism is also needed to achieve student understanding due to a lack of understanding during online learning. It is also one factor that becomes a problem for students in writing descriptive texts due to a need for more understanding of learning.

Miranda's previous research on writing skills in descriptive texts has been carried out. The researchers found several obstacles faced by students in writing descriptive texts and there needed to be more ideas, grammar, and vocabulary.¹¹. Abrar also stated that the most problems faced by the students were grammar and vocabulary, with a total mean of 76 and 81. Regarding students' writing descriptive text-ability, the questionnaires showed that most students agreed that they had difficulties in grammar and vocabulary, with a mean of 2.96¹². Lilis conducted another research. The research results show that the students' mean score is 65.73. It means that the writing ability of the tenth-grade students of SMA N 1 Petanahan is at a sufficient level¹³.

⁸ Wa Ode Ritna Yuniyr Ullah, "STUDENTS' WRITING DIFFICULTY IN COMPOSING A DESCRIPTIVE TEXT (A Quantitative Study of the First Year Students at STKIP Persada Khatulistiwa Sintang)," *VOX EDUKASI: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan* 9, no. 1 (2018): 11–21.

⁹ Kristy Dwi Pratiwi, "Students' Difficulties in Writing English (A Study at the Third Semester Students of English Education Program at University of Bengkulu Academic Year 2011-2012)," *Linguists: Journal of Linguistics and Language Teaching* 3, no. 1 (2016).

¹⁰ Wandra, et.all, "Wabah Corona Virus (Covid-19)". *JIP*. Vol.2, No.5, 2021

¹¹ Konstantina Miranda Wea, "Problems In Writing Descriptive Text Faced By The Seventh Grade Students Of SMP Negeri 2 Kupang In The Academic Year 2019/2020" (2021).

¹² Abrar Rianda, "THE ABILITY OF THE SECOND-YEAR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT" (2020).

¹³ Lilis Kurniawati, "The Analysis of Students' Problems in Writing Descriptive Text at the Tenth Grade Students of SMA N 1 Petanahan in the 2016/2017" (PBI-FKIP, 2017).

Based on the statement above, the researcher wants to find out the students' problems in writing descriptive text at seventh-grade students of SMP Negeri 3 Samarinda and to find out the solutions to students' problems in writing descriptive text. This research will only limit the research on 5 aspects: grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, organization, and content.

B. Literature Review

1. Definition of Writing

Writing is the process of formulating and organizing ideas into writing in order to convey goals and present them on paper. According to Kirszner and Mandell, writing is a process that includes some steps that must be considered by the students as writers, such as planning, organizing, drafting, revising, and editing, to make the reader can understand their writing product¹⁴. Besides, writing is a powerful instrument for students to express their thoughts, feelings, and judgments about what they have read, seen, or experienced¹⁵.

2. The Problem in Writing

According to Hedge, a writer must write with a high level of organization, careful word selection, and complicated grammatical tools to compensate for the lack of prosodic elements in writing¹⁶. Grammatical problems, mechanical problems, sentence structure problems, and diction problems are all linguistic issues that make it difficult for students to write successfully in English.

3. The Definition of Descriptive Text

The depiction process is carried out by sorting the characteristics clearly, and in detail starting from naming, classifying them, and dealing with attributes, behavior, functions, and so on so that readers or listeners can pay attention and feel what the author writes as if they could participate in the writing and see it directly through their own eyes¹⁷.

Descriptive text provides detailed information about a place, person, or thing in detail. The details are usually sensory and are chosen to describe the writer's feelings. It is related to Oshima and Hogue's statement that descriptive writing attracts the senses and tells how something looks, feels, smells, tastes, and sounds¹⁸. In descriptive text. There are two generic structures of descriptive text; identification and descriptions¹⁹.

C. Research Methodology

In this research, the researcher used descriptive qualitative research. The researcher described the students' problems writing descriptive text through qualitative research. This research was conducted at SMP Negeri 3 Samarinda. The

¹⁴ Fitria Ulfa and Rusdi Noor Rosa, "Using Imagery Strategy in Teaching Writing a Descriptive Text to Junior High School Students," *Journal of English Language Teaching* 2, no. 2 (2014): 96–102.

¹⁵ Ontario Education, "A Guide to Effective Instruction in Writing, Kindergarten to Grade 3," 2005.

¹⁶ Ibrahim Mohamed Alfaki, "UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ENGLISH WRITING PROBLEMS: DIAGNOSIS AND REMEDY," 2015.

¹⁷ Eko Noprianto, "Student's Descriptive Text Writing in SFL Perspectives," *IJELTAL (Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics)* 2, no. 1 (2017): 65–81.

¹⁸ Alice Oshima and Ann Hogue, *Introduction to Academic Writing* (Pearson/Longman, 2007).

¹⁹ Yulia Rahmawati, "Generic Structure of Descriptive Text Written by the Tenth Grade Students of MAN Kota Palangka Raya" (IAIN Palangka Raya, 2018).

researcher took the seventh-grade students of SMP Negeri 3 Samarinda. The population in this school is 307 students from grades 7A to 7I, totaling 34 students in each class. The subject of this research consists of two classes, namely, 7A and 7E. The research of the total subject is 69 students at SMP Negeri 3 Samarinda.

The researcher used primary data, including tests and questionnaires, in this research. The researcher gives a test on the topic "School" and 20 questions in the questionnaire. And then, the source of data was also obtained. The researcher used the interview with two English teachers in seventh-grade students. The researcher gives five questions to find solutions to students' problems in writing descriptive text. It can be concluded that the researcher used three instruments in this research. They are tests, questionnaires, and interviews.

This research has three main data sources: tests, questionnaires, and interviews. After the data is collected, it will be analyzed. Collect students' worksheets and analyze their problems. First, the researcher classified the problems. After being classified, the researcher explained in detail about students' problems. To gate the percentage, the researcher used the Liker's scale with 5 alternatives in the questionnaire and used a scoring rubric to obtain a data writing test from Brown. After that, the researcher used the interview to collect data about the students' problems and get the solutions.

The researcher will utilize a data triangulation strategy to validate the data in this investigation. According to Creswell's book, data triangulation is a strategy researcher use to check data from many data sources. Approaches, as well as participation²⁰. Then the selection of the method taken is considered in accordance with the data collection technique. Therefore, it can be concluded that the researcher will use the data triangulation strategy to validate data.

D. Research Findings and Discussion

To find out the students' problems in writing descriptive text and the solutions to students' problems in writing descriptive text at seventh-grade students of SMP Negeri 3 Samarinda. The researcher conducted the data by test, questionnaire, and interview. The research consisted 20 questions in the questionnaire. The result from the questionnaire percentage is 54.8%, meaning the students' writing level is low. In the questionnaire, the researcher classified 3 categories to collect the obtained data; the category is low, medium, and high. The result shows that the low category is vocabulary, with a total percentage of 47.5%. In the medium category is an organization with a total percentage is 54.5%. The last high category is a mechanism, with a total percentage of 66.3%. From the results of the questionnaire obtained, it can be concluded that students' understanding of learning descriptive text still needs to improve. In the results obtained, the biggest problem of students, with a percentage of 47.5%, is vocabulary. Students' problems are in vocabulary and a need for knowledge about the use of these words in written texts. Then a moderate percentage of 54.5% are organizations. A lack of understanding and inappropriate organizational structure in written texts dominates student problems.

Moreover, the last one, with a percentage of 66.3%, is mechanical. Errors in applying punctuation marks, capital letters, and irregular words dominate student

²⁰ John W Creswell, "Educational Research: Planning," *Conducting, and Evaluating* 260 (2012): 375-82.

problems. The questionnaire results show that students still need more understanding in writing descriptive texts, and their understanding could be higher in lessons.

In Finding data from the writing test, the researcher gives the test to students the topic is "school." From the researcher's analysis, the result of the writing test is 47%, which means that students understanding of writing descriptive text could be much higher. However, the researcher found that generally, students had the biggest problems in mechanical, organization, and vocabulary in a descriptive text. The lowest score evidences this compared to the two other aspects.

According to the research findings, to determine students' problems in writing descriptive texts, problems were classified into five aspects: organization, content, grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary. In content, there are several indicators, such as relevance, details regarding the topic are appropriate and complete, fully developed text, and the text shows the effectiveness of the text elements, namely the introductory paragraph, content, and conclusions ²¹. However, many students need help to develop their ideas and complete their paragraphs well. It also means that some students need help understanding how to develop ideas.

According to Oshima & Hogue, the organization of proper writing can be judged through schema structure and its coherence ²². This means that the arrangement of one sentence and another must be related in a sentence. These achievements can be in the form of repetition of keywords and the use of pronouns using transitions to connect ideas and develop ideas. In an organization, there are two categories, identification, and description, in identifying a predetermined topic. Students do not identify the object at the beginning of the paragraph and do not identify it in general but describe it. Therefore, identification of students' writing in descriptive texts is not good, very weak in the understanding of writing identification because identification should only be about introducing the subject or thing to be explained. Therefore, in contrast to the identification structure, they managed to describe the object clearly in the second structure. From the results of the research and discussion above, it can be seen that students still need to improve in organizing descriptive texts. Almost all of the students are at a moderate level. Student writing needs to be clarified, including title, identification, description, and conclusion. In this aspect, students still need to improve in organizing descriptive texts. Almost all of the students are at a moderate level. Student writing could be clearer, including the title, identification, description, and conclusion.

In writing a text, the writer must understand grammar to convey ideas. Grammar writing greatly influences the understanding of an English text so that if an error occurs, there will be a misunderstanding of the information conveyed by the author. In this research, the results of students' writing still needed to be corrected. In the use of grammar, such as in agreement, wherein a single subject in the present tense sample, the verb needed to add -s or -es, but most students still needed to add it. It can be proven by 25 students with low grammatical aspect scores with a score of 1 with a note "grammar inaccuracies or frequent agreements." The students who got the highest score in the grammatical aspect were only 6 students. It is also related to the answers to their questionnaires that they need help in grammar; they

²¹ Sara Cushing, "Assessing Writing," *Cambridge: Cambridge University*, 2002.

²² Oshima and Hogue, *Introduction to Academic Writing*.

cannot distinguish when the right time to use tenses and verbs is. Thus, students should learn more about the function and placement of tenses.

According to Weigl, vocabulary refers to the number of variations of words written in the written product and students' ability to consider word choices to express their ideas effectively²³. However, students need more effectiveness in choosing varied and clear vocabulary. It means that many students still need clarification about processing the vocabulary used. It is supported by evidence from student questionnaires. Students need help choosing word forms, knowledge, and misunderstanding, with a total score of 51.3%. Confused and incomprehensible vocabulary can have an impact on the meaning of sentences. As many as 31 students have low scores in vocabulary with a value of 1, with the conclusion that their vocabulary knowledge is very weak, so more varied vocabulary memorization is needed to develop a sentence in the text. At the same time, those who got the highest score were only 8 students who could choose words effectively and precisely.

Mechanical problems involve capitalization, punctuation, and spelling errors. Mechanics is the ability of students to write down the spelling of every word used in the text, including capital letters and punctuation marks. Punctuation is a very important element in written communication because punctuation marks direct the reader to understand the intonation of sentences written by the writer. According to Awad, punctuation marks give direction to the readers about what the writer wants to convey²⁴. However, from the data obtained²⁴, the biggest problem for students regards mechanics in writing. Students dominate errors from incorrect spelling, not paying attention to punctuation marks and improper use of capital letters. Students got the lowest score in the mechanical aspect.

In the writing aspect, one thing that must be considered is content. In content, there are several indicators, such as relevance, details regarding the topic are appropriate and complete, fully developed text, and the text shows the effectiveness of the text elements, namely the introductory paragraph, content, and conclusions²⁵. In this research, students took a written test with the topic "my school." Student test results show that students write the topic entirely and clearly, but the details are almost related to the topic. The students got the highest score in the content aspect with a total score of 141, which this finding can prove.

In order to address the second research problem about what solutions to solve problems in writing descriptive texts faced by students, the writer interviewed 2 English teachers to get the answers. The writer interviewed the teacher by asking 5 questions. According to English teachers, writing is one of the four English skills that are believed to be more difficult than others. It causes students to be lazy in writing English and think that English is difficult. The first result of interviewing 2 English teachers found that the seventh class had problems writing descriptive text. They needed help understanding English learning.

²³ Cushing, "Assessing Writing."

²⁴ Ahmed Awad Raba, "The Most Common Punctuation Errors Made by the English and the TEFL Majors at An-Najah National University," *An-Najah University Journal for Research-B (Humanities)* 10, no. 1 (2012): 211–33.

²⁵ Basyiruddin Usman Asnawir and M Basyiruddin Usman, "Media Pembelajaran Jakarta: Ciputat Pers," 2002.

Based on teachers' interviews, they have the same solution in dealing with students' learning problems: by providing reading teaching materials that can help them remember and train them to expand their vocabulary and ideas in writing a text. It can train them to memorize new vocabulary and be able to pour it into the main idea in the story.

The teachers also have strategies to solve the students' problems in writing descriptive text. The teachers used media tools in the interview to teach the descriptive text. The reason teachers use media in teaching is that the media helps students focus more on exploring the material provided. Media itself is something that transmits messages and stimulates students' thoughts, feelings, and desires so that it can encourage the learning process to occur in them²⁶. Teachers use images, objects, or videos as media in the classroom. Using these media, students will more easily understand how to describe an object or place and convey it in a text. Besides helping students to think more creatively, practicing teaching using media can also increase their vocabulary. Many students also need to improve in reading, which correlates with writing in descriptive text. Therefore, the teacher provides reading materials for descriptive text material as their teaching strategy. The teaching materials provided are related to the description text material. The reading can help students understand the text's content, seek detailed information, and find solutions. It can also help students get more new vocabulary so that there is no weak knowledge of vocabulary, word forms, or their lack of understanding.

Furthermore, the teacher also uses two languages in teaching English, and the goal is that students do not find it difficult to understand the explanation given. The teacher also said that sometimes the teacher would guess and ask questions about vocabulary, and the students had to answer them. The aim was to train students to memorize words in English.

Based on teachers' interviews, they agree that the given strategy will work by providing the right strategies and helping students deal with their problems. Then learning will take place comfortably, thus making the learning atmosphere more focused, thus making it easier for students to focus on the learning provided. By using the media, the students understand the description text. Indirectly also helps students get diverse vocabulary, so they have many broad ideas in writing.

The teachers have several solutions, so students' problems in writing descriptive texts can be resolved using the reading teaching materials and the right media tools. The students' problems will be slightly improved. To get the students' attention in learning English effectively. The right strategy and the right way of teaching can also affect students' learning abilities.

Therefore, to do good writing, students must open their minds to develop titles and main ideas into phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. The teachers also said that students should have a sufficient vocabulary. To solve students' problems in writing descriptive text. Teachers have solutions that can be used as strategies in the classroom, and the teachers must provide some motivation to help students in the spirit of learning and provide comfort while learning. The strategies provided must also make students comfortable in learning, such as using interesting and easy-to-understand learning media. The teaching media used can be in the form of video playback, images, or media tools that are easy to describe. In addition, the provision

²⁶ Asnawir and Usman.

of reading teaching materials also helps students to remember and acquire much new vocabulary. That will help students remember and expand ideas from reading the teaching materials.

Based on previous research done by Abrar²⁷ found that to solve students' learning problems in writing descriptive text is by using a teaching strategy. The strategy created can minimize students' learning errors in writing descriptive text. In addition, using strategies in teaching also helps teachers to streamline learning in the classroom.

E. Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion, the researcher concludes. Students need to improve their ability to write a descriptive text. The questionnaire results show that students have basic skills in descriptive text. This is concrete by the average questionnaire results, 54.8%. This explains that there are still many students who agree with the rules. They need help understanding the descriptive text. However, students get a general knowledge of descriptive texts. They still need help with some of the components of descriptive texts, such as content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. These findings can be proven by the results of the descriptive text-writing test of students with an average of 47%. Based on the analysis of students' documents in writing descriptive texts, students need help writing descriptive texts. It was found that many students still had difficulties in mechanical writing, such as they still needed to understand the use of capital letters, punctuation marks, and errors in spelling. Their knowledge needs to be improved, and the statement in the questionnaire proves that they agree with the statement that they do not use capital letters at the beginning of sentences. They do not use capital letters for people's names and place names.

Then students need help with the organization; many students cannot develop their ideas in writing, so students cannot complete the texts they make. Then, the other students' problems are grammar; many students still need help with tenses in sentences, such as addition (-s,-es), and the use of prepositions which is not correct. Another problem that arises is the problem of vocabulary; many students need to use the correct vocabulary or misuse vocabulary and repetition of long-winded words. It is related to students who agree with the questionnaire and stated that they need clarification to avoid repetition of vocabulary that is always repeated. Finally, regarding the problem in content, some students still need clarification about distinguishing identification and description in descriptive text sentences so that there is an incomplete text.

According to the teacher, to overcome the problems in writing descriptive texts faced by students, there are several solutions. Such as the use of media in teaching. Many media can be used to maximize learning in the classroom, especially in helping students' problems in writing; the use of picture media, and other teaching aids, can further increase student focus on learning. Then the teacher also uses teaching and reading materials to train students to broaden their learning horizons. Besides that, the teacher also provides teaching materials for practice questions that can help students to be more active in writing.

²⁷ Abrar Rianda, "THE ABILITY OF THE SECOND-YEAR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT."

The Students' Problems in Writing Descriptive Text at Seventh Grade Students of Smp Negeri 3 Samarinda

The results of this study are expected to be able to provide additional information to teachers in teaching descriptive texts in the classroom, so that teachers can improve the delivery of appropriate teaching for students, of course teachers should be able to improve again by trying to use other media that can make it easier for students to remember teaching. Of course, it can also help students in writing. Then, this research is also expected to help students in correcting their mistakes in lessons; it can also help students remember that small mistakes in writing can affect their writing. Then for further researchers, it is hoped that this research can help in adding information, and it is also hoped that future researchers can get other problems in students' writing, so that it can be a reference that students are still lacking in writing.

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