

**STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES ON WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT
BY EIGHTH GRADE OF SMP DARUSSALAM MEDAN**

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Abstract

Keywords:
Difficulties,
Writing skill,
Descriptive text.

This research investigates an overview of students' difficulties in writing descriptive text through linguistic and psychology problems. This research presents a case study as qualitative research of students in eighth grade of SMP Darussalam Medan. The sample comprised 10 students (4 males and 6 females) through purposive sampling. The criteria for students are that they write texts according to the themes given by the researcher. This study used observation, documentation, and interview. In this study, data collection from each instrument was as follows: document data collection through student descriptive writing, and direct interview data collection via video call on WhatsApp. The data analysis procedure of this study was followed Lambert & Lambert namely is qualitative descriptive. Qualitative Descriptive research, on the other hand, is fully data driven, with codes developed from the data as the investigation progresses (Lambert & Lambert, 2013).. Based on the observation result supported by document and interview through triangulation method, students found difficulties to use punctuation and capitalization in writing descriptive. Using grammar, lack of vocabulary, and mechanics also the difficulties that faced by the students. In addition as the suggestion, by practice of writing, the students can improve their English skill specifically in writing.

Kata Kunci:
Kesulitan,
Ketrampilan
Menulis,
Teks Deskriptif

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menyelidiki gambaran kesulitan siswa dalam menulis teks deskriptif melalui masalah kebahasaan. Penelitian ini menyajikan studi kasus sebagai penelitian kualitatif siswa kelas VIII SMP Darussalam Medan. Sampel terdiri dari 10 siswa (4 laki-laki dan 6 perempuan) melalui purposive sampling. Penelitian ini menggunakan observasi, dokumentasi, dan wawancara. Dalam penelitian ini, pengumpulan data dari masing-masing instrumen adalah sebagai berikut: pengumpulan data dokumen melalui penulisan deskriptif siswa, dan pengumpulan data wawancara langsung melalui video call di WhatsApp. Prosedur analisis data penelitian ini diikuti oleh

Miles dan Huberman pada tahun 1984 yang meliputi reduksi data, interpretasi data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Berdasarkan hasil observasi yang didukung dengan dokumen dan wawancara melalui triangulasi metode, siswa mengalami kesulitan dalam menggunakan tanda baca dan penggunaan huruf kapital dalam menulis deskriptif. Siswa merasa kesulitan dalam menggunakan tata bahasa karena kurangnya kosa kata dan mekanik. Selain itu, latihan menulis karangan juga membuat siswa terampil dalam menulis. Dengan latihan, siswa akan mengetahui kesulitan yang mereka hadapi dalam menulis untuk mengetahui kualitas tulisan mereka.

INTRODUCTION

As one of the most popular language in Indonesia, English has success made people interest to learn the language. Formally, there are four skills that exist in learning English, namely are reading, speaking, writing, and listening. The researcher focused this study is about writing skill. Writing known as the manifestation of language of the form of letters, symbols, or words (Daulay, 2016). For the learner who learned a language writing is very crucial.

In the classroom, the majority of the students believe that writing is difficult. It is because there are some crucial elements in writing, such as vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and grammar (Ismayanti, 2020). Writing text is a challenging for students, particularly for junior high school students in eighth grade who are also learning several types of text, one of which is writing descriptive text. Students should pay more attention to the details of the object to describe with the appropriate structure.

Linguistics (language use and vocabulary), psychology (content aspect), and cognitive difficulty, according to (Kristiana et al., 2021), are the major categories that make writing difficult (organization and mechanics). Grammar, vocabulary, language use and sentence choice are problems in linguistics. Because there is no direct engagement or input from the reader when they are writing, the psychology difficulties are about the writer's difficulty. Then, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing, are all aspect of cognitive impairments.

Descriptive text is one of curriculum in English learning in Indonesia. It is taught starting on seventh grade in junior high school and continued until the eighth grade. Descriptive text is a text that describe every particular thing, place, picture, person, and anything. Students who learn English must understand the descriptive writing genre. A descriptive paragraph according to Meisuri (2013) is a paragraph that vividly depicts a person, place, or thing in such away the reader can visualize the topic and can enter to the writer's experience. In fact, not all students can compose a descriptive paragraph appropriately and in accordance with the descriptive text's existing parts. Teachers of English have already done a good job of teaching the topic to the students, but sometimes they still struggled to write descriptive paragraphs.

Based on the problem of the researcher state above, it can be conclude that there are still many students got the difficulties when trying to write a descriptive text especially in eighth grade of *SMP Darussalam Medan*. Analyzing difficulties is an important thing for researchers to do because the results of the research on these difficulties can be used as an introspection discussion for teachers and students to develop these skills, especially in writing descriptive text skills. From the difficulties experienced by students, teachers can think of ways so that students do not experience many difficulties in learning, improving the previous ways of learning or provide more innovative methods than before. Thus, the researcher is interested in analyzing deeply about the difficulties in writing descriptive text by the eighth grade of *SMP Darussalam Medan*.

Writing Skill

Writing is a vital of every stage of life, from elementary school to college and beyond. It allows the students to express themselves, develop creativity and critical thinking skills and gain self-confidence.

Writing is a complex activity that necessitates the use of different number of different processes a method. Planning what to say and how to say it, converting plan into written text, and reviewing to enhance current material are the three main stages involved in writing. Setting goals, creating ideas and

arranging ideas into a writing plan are the three components of planning. The concept of the authors make numerous draft of their works, planning and editing them is so widely accepted today that some of vocabulary used to describe these processes has found its way into more basic daily duties (Swanson et al., n.d.)

Every time you write, you write for reason. You have a reason to communicate in text, even it's just a quick message. Clarifying your purpose will always assist you in deciding what to write, how to structure your ideas, and staying on track while writing (Langan & Winstanley, 2014).

In EFL writing class, according to Dewi, 2021 the writing process approach took a long time to complete. Pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, proofreading, and publishing are just a few of the processes (Dewi, 2021).

According to Welch (2017), essays and paragraphs can be written in a variety of style. A writer can select a type based on the goals the author's want to achieve, the type of information to be discussed, and the effect the author's wants to have on the reader. In general, there are five form of writing are narrative writing, recount writing, descriptive writing, expository writing, persuasive writing.

Descriptive Text

A descriptive text is a type of text that is written with the intent of describing a certain person, place, or thing in great detail. Students learn about the social function, generic structure, and lexicogrammatical elements through this text, just as they do with other genres (Mardiyah et al., 2013).

The process of describing is accomplished by clearly ordering their characteristics, beginning with their names, classifying them, and dealing with their attributes, behaviours, functions, and so on. So, the readers and listeners can notice what the writer is writing about as if they could see it with their own eyes (Noprianto, 2017). Descriptive writing has its own linguistic characteristic in addition to its schematic form. The use of identifiable participants, written in the present tense, linking verbs, adjectives, and relational and material processes are all linguistic elements of descriptive text (Yoandita, 2019).

Difficulties Factor in Writing

In class, the majority of students believe that writing is difficult. According to Farooq (2012), there are some crucial elements in writing, such as vocabulary mastery, spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

The English language contains many inconsistencies and peculiarities that cause a slew of problem in writing, particularly for second language learners. Spelling in English is a good example. A misspelled term not only deviates from the norm, but also has a negative impact on the intended meaning. Spelling is the ability to recognize a word in spoken or written form. Spelling and decoding skills are closely linked, students with spelling issue must recall the spelling of frequently used, irregular words like “right,” “government” and so on. Students must learn each word as a separate entity. Thus, there is no logical relationship between sound and symbol.

It is critical that learners accurately employ punctuation marks in order to convey the content. Students commonly make errors in the use of commas, full stops, semicolon, and colons, which impedes communication. The most common writing difficulty that is not caused by L1 interference is the usage of capital letters. Capitalization issues are a part of the punctuation issue, which can be caused by insufficient learning or ineffective education. Punctuation makes it easier for others to understand what you are trying to communicate.

The most challenging aspect in writing is grammar struggle to apply proper sentence structure and paragraph development, as well as to create a logical shape. Run-on sentences, fragments, and jargon, as well as the inclusion of relevant information, the usage of various types of sentences, subject-verb agreement, modifier placement, tense agreement, and parallel construction, are all examples of grammar abilities. Grammar is more than just a series of rules, it is a living, breathing, linguistic structure. Learning grammar, on the other hand, can be tedious because no one likes rules, and memorizing rules is worse than implementing them. Students normally understand how to construct tenses, but often struggle when it comes to using them in written language. Combining two whole sentences is tough for students.

According to Daulay (2015) words play a significant role in practically all of our actions. The meaning of spoken and written plans, directions, information, and advice must be quickly comprehended in every type of work that we do. The term "vocabulary" refers to "all the words that a person knows and uses." Knowing a term, on the other hand, is more than just being able to recognize or use it. There are numerous components of word knowledge that are used to assess its level of understanding.

METHOD

In conducted the research, researcher choose one of junior high school in Medan, specifically is SMP Swasta Darussalam Medan. The data of this research has been taken from students' descriptive writing at eighth grade, the interview with the students, and English teacher, it has been used as the source of the data.

In this study, the researcher employs qualitative descriptive strategy. The goal of qualitative descriptive research is to learn more about the nature of the events being studied. As a result, data collection entails of small number of organized, open-ended, individual or focus group interviews, ranging from minimal moderate. Observations, as well as the inspection of records, reports, images and papers, can all be part of data collecting. Qualitative descriptive research, on the other hand, is fully data driven, with codes developed from the data as the investigation progresses (Lambert & Lambert, 2013).

Data is gathering through observation, documentation and interview. The researcher invites the students to write a descriptive paragraph about their family as part of the documentation. The responder is asked the identical question during the interview, which the researcher records. As an instrument, a documentation checklist and question lists are utilized. In this study, a documentation checklist was used. The goal of documentation checklist is to document the students' sheet. This study used the question list as a tool for interviewing students. The researcher prepares a list of questions to ask students who are having trouble composing descriptive text.

There are four actions in data analysis namely are data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion or verification. Data collection, which include gathering data at the research site through, observation, interviews and documentation. Data reduction, namely as a process of selection, focusing, abstracting, transformation rough data that is in the field directly. After collecting the students' worksheet, the researcher selects those that demonstrate the students' difficulty in producing descriptive paragraph, which are then analysed by the researcher. The researcher then selects a group of students who have difficulty producing descriptive text and interviews the students to determine the factors that contribute to their challenges in creating descriptive text. Data display, in this step, the researcher examined the students' descriptive text worksheets to determine what difficulties they face when writing descriptive text about their family, as well as the students' answers to the interview questions to determine the factors that contribute to the students' difficulties in writing descriptive text about their family. The last is drawing conclusions, namely in data collection, researchers must understand and responsive to something that is examined directly in the field by compiling patterns of direction and cause and effect. In this case, the researcher comes to a conclusion about students' challenges in writing descriptive text and the factors that contribute to their difficulties.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The researcher main focus of this research is the students' difficulties of writing. The researcher applied the observation as one of the method of data collection in this research. Based on the observation that conducted on May, 30th, 2022, the students' skills of writing were low level.

The researcher conducted the observation in grades 8.2 according to the recommendations of the English teacher. Observation were conducted on Monday, May 30th, 2022 during English lesson. On that day there were 2 English lessons, namely at 10.15 to 11.45. The researcher paid attention to the teacher teaching in the classroom during the observation. Based on the observations made

by the researcher, the researcher concluded that many students in grade 8.2 still had difficulties in writing long text in English. But, for short sentence they were able to write them well using the vocabulary the found everyday.

As additional data collection, the researcher conducted documentation by asked the students to write descriptive text about their family to find their difficulties in their writing document. The documentation was made by the researcher at June 2nd, 2022. All of students are 27 students, but researcher took 10 students' writing document. The criteria for students are that they write texts according to the themes given by the researcher.

After analysing all students' writing document, the student got results about the students' difficulties. To know about the most dominant difficulties in writing descriptive text, the researcher presented the data based on students' writing documents. It was consist of 4 difficulties, such as content, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. Those items will be presented in the table below:

Table 1. The finding of the category of students' difficulties in writing descriptive text

No.	Names	Content	Vocabulary	Grammar	Mechanics	Total
1.	M.R.H	3	2	3	3	11
2.	M.R	4	3	3	3	13
3.	A.F	4	4	3	2	13
4.	S.R.A	3	3	3	2	11
5.	K.F	4	4	2	3	13
6.	N.N	4	2	2	2	10
7.	A.Z	2	2	3	2	9
8.	R.R.A	3	3	3	2	11
9.	D.R.R	3	2	2	2	9
10.	R.T	2	2	3	2	9
Total		32	27	27	23	109

Based on the result of the document above, the students faced difficulties in writing descriptive. The researcher found that the students feel difficult to use grammar, describing the topic detail, lack of vocabulary, and students also have difficulties in using punctuation, spelling, the use of capitalization and sentences structure.

Researcher conducted the interview with the students and English teacher to find out the factors that caused the students difficult in writing English text specifically descriptive text. According to the interview with the students, it is difficult for Indonesian students to use correct structure in English writing. They stated that they were confused in arrange the sentence well, because some of the sentence in English is arranged upside down in Indonesian. The use of subject verb-agreement is difficult for the students, especially singular and plural placement. Some of them forgot to add “s” for plural. They understand the theory but they forgot to applied it into their writing. On the other hand, many types of tenses also made the students confused which one they need to apply in appropriate text.

Discussions

From the research findings above, researcher focused on four categories of students’ difficulties on writing descriptive text. According to Farooq (2012), there are some crucial elements in writing, such as vocabulary mastery, spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Researcher put spelling, punctuation, and capitalization as the mechanics. Thus, the results of finding are content, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics.

After analyzing the data, based on students’ writing documents, researcher found that some students wrote their paragraph well and details enough as descriptive text. The researcher asked the student to describe their family, how many people of their family, describe about their younger brother, their younger sister, their older brother and also their older sister. The students’ average score in content are 3, it is good enough as junior high school students.

Vocabulary issue is one of the most difficulties that faced by the students in writing English especially descriptive text. It can be shown on the table score from the students’ writing document. Based on the interview, almost all of the students think that they cannot remember a lot of vocabulary in English because they are not using it every day. Lack of practice is one of the factors. They are not

using English in their daily activity, they also only learn English 2 times in a week, so it is not surprising that they do not know much vocabulary.

However, vocabulary is not the only one difficulties that faced by students. Grammar also crucial thing that students need to pay attention with, especially in writing English text. Based on Abdulmajeed and Hameed (2017, as cited in Naseer, 2019), grammar is a non-easy solution subject. It is complicated and challenging. Many students face difficulties to use tenses in their writing. Due to Indonesian structure, a sentence can be without a time signal, unlike English sentences. One of the biggest difficulties in writing descriptive text that faced by students is grammar.

The most difficulties that researcher found in students' writing document is mechanics. It is consist of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. The error that many researcher encountered in students' writing document was the use of capitalization and punctuation. Many students use lowercase letters at the beginning of sentences, in the initial letters of people's names and city names, after periods and question marks. While many students use capital letters in inappropriate places, such as in the middle of a sentence or after comma.

Based on the interview, the researcher concluded the factor called as psychological factor. Lacked of interest in learning English was one of the factors students' fell difficult in writing. The best way in learning a foreign language is practice, but if the learner was not interested in learning, here is the problem.

Students' motivation is also influence in writing. Researcher considered that writing is challenging, that's why students needs motivation to start write a text. The researcher found that some students experience disinterest in the topics they are not good at. Specifically in descriptive paragraph, they need to know what the thing that they describe.

Furthermore, writing anxiety is the most answer from the students' interview, it can also be the reason of students' difficulty in writing a descriptive paragraph. The interview result showed that the researcher found that some students felt afraid of writing English text because they afraid their make a mistake in vocabulary or grammar or anything in English writing. It happened

because they think that the vocabulary they will encounter and use will be difficult if the topic is difficult. Usually students who feel afraid in writing are students who are not satisfied with the results of their writing due to fear of experiencing errors. It also happens because of the limited knowledge of the second language, which makes their fear factor in expressing what they think.

CONCLUSION

Based on research finding and discussion, the researcher make conclusion as follows (1). The eight grades' students of SMP Darussalam Medan had difficulties in writing descriptive text. Their average of writing is only 3 from 10 students. Their struggled are from the content, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics. The most difficulty that researcher encounter is in the mechanics of writing, it includes punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. A lot of students make mistakes especially in capitalization and they lack of using punctuation. For grammar and vocabulary they just need to learn more about it. Then, they need to read more to develop ideas to improve the content aspect. (2). Then, factors that cause writing difficulties for students are psychological factor, such as lack of interest in learning English, not being motivated to learn and writing English texts and also writing anxiety where students are afraid of making mistakes before starting to write English text.

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