

Student's problems and student's strategies to overcome the problems in writing descriptive text

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received 15 February 2022

Revised 10 June 2022

Accepted 27 June 2022

Keywords

Descriptive text

Problem

Writing

ABSTRACT

The objective of this research was to investigate the student's problems and student's strategies in writing descriptive text, the researcher try to examine the problem experienced by students when writing descriptive text both in terms of academic problems, language, and children's psychology in writing descriptive text. This study was conducted at the tenth grade social science 2 of SMA N 1 Nguter. This is a descriptive qualitative study. The instruments used in the research were questionnaire and interview. Based on the results, it was found that students experienced problems in three aspects of the study, namely linguistic, psychological, and cognitive difficulties. In each of these aspects, organization is the highest one followed by behaviour, feedback, grammatical items, and vocabulary. In organizations, difficulties in developing idea are the most difficult. Anxiety is the highest problem in behavior, while the practice is the most problem in the feedback. The problem in using connectors is the highest point in the grammatical items and the lack of vocabulary is the most problems in the vocabulary. Based on the questionnaire and interview results, organization was the most problems aspect in writing descriptive text. To overcome the problems, the students choose to master vocabulary and learning and learning from other sources such as the internet while the others like to read from dictionary.

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How to Cite: Handayani, D. F., Arianti, A., & Hartini. (2022). Student's problems and student's strategies to overcome the problems in writing descriptive text. *International Undergraduate Conference on English Education*, 1(2), 359-363.

1. Introduction

Writing is one of language skills which is important for the students to acquire well in order to master English. Not only has writing significant role especially for communicating in society, the ability to write has become a skill in students' life. It is the fact that almost every activity of the daily life of students is done in written forms, such as doing exercises, homework, and final examination (Dastgeer & Afzal, 2015). Skilled writers use strategies to plan, write, and revise their compositions, as well as strategies to self-regulate performance (Graham et.al 2020).

Despite of its importance, writing is not an easy skill to be mastered, especially if the writing itself has to be written in another language but the mother important tongue. Tarigan (1994) stated that using English as a foreign language is different with first and second. But it is just different in environmental using but a language is still a language. Teaching English for foreign language is teaching English in

general. So, even in the country who uses English as foreign language the goal is still that English is an international language. They can communicate and use English in general and internationally (Oshima and Hogue, 1997).

In this case, writing in English can be troublesome for students as English is not the first language in this country, not even a second language, yet a foreign language. Harmer (2007) argues that lack of knowledge about the writing process, experiencing difficulties in generating topics and ideas, do little planning, lack strategies for producing and organizing text, have difficulties with the mechanics of writing, and engage in little or no revision, make writing becomes even more difficult ability to be mastered by the students.

According to Pratiwi, et.al (2021), there are three major categories which make writing difficult namely Linguistics (language use and vocabulary), Psychology (content aspect), and Cognitive difficulty (organization and mechanics). Linguistics difficulties are about grammar, vocabulary, language use and choice of sentence. The physiology difficulties are about writer's difficulty because there aren't direct interaction and feedback from the reader when they are writing. Finally, cognitive difficulties are about spelling, punctuation, capitalization and paragraphing.

Based on the observation done at X Social Science 2 in SMAN 1 Nguter, there are some problems found in teaching writing. It is found that the students' score which is still low. The English teacher claimed that the students were lack of vocabulary and writing ungrammatically. This agrees with the research conducted by Millah (2015) which states that there are some obstacles in the face in writing include: lack of knowledge about the process of writing, the difficulty in generating topics and ideas, least of planning, lack of strategy to produce and organize text, experiencing difficulties with writing mechanism.

There are several studies that have been conducted regarding on students' difficulties on writing descriptive text. Rianto (2017) found that the students' difficulties in writing are the grammatical skill, vocabulary mastery, and expressing idea. Aji (2016) pointed that there are nine difficulties in writing descriptive text that were supporting sentences, developing ideas, main idea, lack of vocabulary, grammar, lack of sources, arrangement, coherent and cohesion and diction. Same line with it, Hanafi (2013) argued that the students' difficulties in writing descriptive text are generic structure of descriptive text consist of describing object in detail and grammar mastery such as simple present tense, lack of vocabulary and enable to write correct spelling words, and lack of creativity.

Based on the explanation above, it was found that writing is an essential skill for students to be mastered but they have some problems in doing that especially in writing descriptive text. So, it is important to investigate these phenomena. This study aimed to investigate; (1) What are the students' problems in writing descriptive text at the tenth social science 2 of SMA N 1 Nguter? (2) What is the most dominant problem faced by the students in writing descriptive text? (3) How do the students overcome these problems?

2. Method

The research methodology that used in this research is descriptive qualitative. According to Bodgan and Taylor (In Moleong, 2010: 4). Qualitative research is the procedure of research which produces descriptive data in the form of written or oral words of people behavior which can be observed.

2.1. Respondents

The subjects of the research are students at SMA N 1 Nguter. The researcher chose X Social Science 2 class as the subject of the research with 36 students.

2.2. Instruments

According to Sugiyono (2009:222) in qualitative research, the instrument of the research is the researcher herself. In conducting this research, the researcher needed some supporting equipment such as a laptop and data questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of three major aspects, namely linguistic, psychology, and cognitive difficulties. Each aspect contains 2 sub-aspects which contain 5 statements of each. The students need to choose options which are Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The interview consisted of five open-ended questions. The interview questions aimed to take depth knowledge of the difficulties.

2.3. Technique of Analyzing Data

In this research, the researcher used Miles and Huberman model of technique of collecting data. According to Miles and Huberman in Sugiyono (2010: 337-345) “activity in analyzing data, they are data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing or verification”.

1) *Data collecting*

The researcher collected the data from the source of data, which include in questionnaire about students’ problems in writing descriptive text. The questionnaire was 13 questions for students and 5 questions for the teacher.

2) *Data reduction*

After collecting the data, the researcher summarized, chose the basic things about students problems and the response of the teacher.

3) *Data display*

After reducing the data, the researcher made the data display, so it will help the researcher in analyzing data.

4) *Conclusion drawing or verification*

In this step, the researcher will make the conclusion of data analysis. The conclusion is a new finding that have not been there.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. The Most Dominant Problems Faced by the Students

Based on the questionnaire result, it was found that the most problem aspect in writing descriptive text for tenth grade students social science 2 SMA N 1 Nguter was the organization. It is confirmed by the result of questionnaire which showed that the most problems aspect in writing is when the students choosing and arranging words into a meaningful sentence. The students have difficulty or problems in writing from looking the idea of writing to the execution the idea. Organizing and developing ideas seems the bigger problems compare to other indicators.

The result of this research agrees with Rianto (2017) which found that many students have limited vocabulary list and poor choice of words. The problem in writing descriptive text could be happened because the students did not know many English vocabulary and they tend to put the words which were inappropriate in context. Rohmatilah (2014) stated the students are difficult to master vocabulary because the number of words that students need to learn is exceedingly large while the limitations of sources of information about words. In addition, words in English are complex which knowing a word involves much more than knowing its dictionary definition.

As in psychology problems, the students have low motivation and confidence in writing. There are two reasons for that. First, the students think that they do not have much experience in writing. The second, the students have mindset that writing is a difficult activity. They believe that they do not have the ability to produce a meaningful text by themselves (Yendri, 2019). Lack of practice might be the major reason in psychology problems.

It is found in the feedback aspect almost all indicators were in positive. Fareed, Asraf & Bilal (2016) added that the students must acquire component skills, practice integrating them, and know when to apply what they have learned over and over again.

As in cognitive problems, the students need to create, to coordinate, and to express ideas when dealing with writing activities. Rianto (2017) stated that it is necessary for some students to go slowly and take time to think about what they want to say before they write. Same line with it, Hanafi (2013) mentioned that the ability of the students to produce and organize their ideas will impact the quality of their final piece of writing. The students do not have difficulty in mechanic aspect.

3.2. Students’ Strategies to Overcome these Problems

The questionnaire result shows the strategies the students use to overcome the problem they faced in writing. The result suggest that vocabulary mastery is very important in order to improve their writing. It can be done by practicing over and over again. For some, they practice by reading some

examples of descriptive text from other sources such as books or internet. The others prefer to read and to remember words from dictionary. In addition, the students tend to browse from internet descriptive texts which have similar topic and study more by reading them. They believe it can help them to improve their organizational skill in writing descriptive text.

There are some strategies used by the students in order to overcome the problems they faced in writing. The strategies are based on of how they have the problems at first place. Hanafi (2013) explained that the factors causing difficulties in writing descriptive text are learners' background, teaching technique, and the learners' environment. It means that the students have different factors of why they might have the difficulties. It is necessary for the teachers to identify these factors before implementing the strategies to overcome them (Akbarjono et. Al., 2021).

The students believe that by learning over and over again, their vocabulary mastery has to be improved because writing requires more than just words and phrases being made. Students should be able to compose a connected sequence of terms and phrases that are grammatically and logically linked in order to be able to create a piece of writing in descriptive text, so that the intention they have in their mind will fit the intended readers. Azizah (2017) also argued that vocabulary mastery associates with writing descriptive text so the students need to improve their vocabulary mastery if they want to improve their writing skill.

According to Depari, Azwandi, and Syahrial (2017), it should be considered that if good writers can use words, they can effectively construct a composition so it is required for them to have the requisite vocabulary knowledge. Yunita (2010) also added that the students prefer to scan texts from the internet that have common subject matter and study more after reading them. They believe it can help them to improve their organizational and grammatical skill in writing. By looking to other examples from internet, the students can imitate and modify their writing into the better one.

4. Conclusion

It can be concluded that there were five sub-aspect which is found in the interval positive difficult to the students which are grammatical items, vocabulary, learners' behavior, feedback, and organization. Organization was the most difficult aspect for tenth grade social science 2 of SMA N 1 Nguter. Finally, the strategies which the students choose to overcome these difficulties are mastering vocabulary and learning from other sources such as books or the internet.

Based on the conclusion above, there are some suggestions proposed in this study. (1) It is suggested for the English Teacher Organization to conduct workshops and seminars regarding discussions or presentations of matter which is related to writing skills in hope to help the teachers overcoming the problem they faced in the classroom especially about students' difficulty in writing, (2) It is suggested for teacher to understand deeply about students' difficulties in writing, and (3) it is suggested to next researcher to conduct similar research in larger scope, and the correlation between students' difficulties and their ability in writing.

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