

**Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Writing Recount Text at WR. Supratman
2 School**

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify and examine the challenges students face when composing recount texts, focusing on the experiences of grade XI MIPA 2 students at WR. Supratman 2 School. A qualitative research approach was utilized, collecting data through interviews and written tests to gain a comprehensive understanding of the difficulties encountered by students. The analysis of the data revealed that grammar was the most significant area of struggle for the students. Many students exhibited difficulties with the proper use of tenses, sentence structure, and vocabulary, which impacted their ability to write coherent and accurate recount texts. Based on these findings, the study recommends that teachers place greater emphasis on teaching grammar in a more structured and gradual manner, ensuring that students have ample time to grasp the concepts fully. Teachers should consider adopting a slower pace and using diverse instructional strategies, such as interactive exercises and practical applications, to reinforce grammar rules and facilitate better understanding. Additionally, the study suggests that students engage in daily English practice, including writing, reading, and listening activities, to enhance their language skills over time. Regular practice can help students become more familiar with the language, improve their grammatical accuracy, and increase their confidence in using English both in and out of the classroom. By addressing these challenges through targeted teaching strategies and consistent practice, both teachers and students can work together to improve the overall quality of students' writing and their ability to effectively compose recount texts. The findings of this study highlight the importance of a focused approach to grammar instruction and encourage a more supportive learning environment for students developing their English language skills.

Keywords: Writing Analysis; Recount Text; Students' Difficulties

INTRODUCTION

Language is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as "the principal method of human communication, consisting of words used in a structured and conventional way and conveyed by speech, writing, or gesture." English, a globally spoken language, is used for social, educational, and diplomatic purposes. In Indonesia, however, English is considered a foreign language, unlike in many other countries where it is treated as a second language. As a foreign language in Indonesia, English is primarily used in formal educational settings, such as schools or universities, rather than in everyday communication. This indicates that for most Indonesians, English is learned as a school subject rather than being integrated into daily life.

To effectively learn English, learners must master the four key language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Writing, in particular, serves as a medium to express ideas, emotions, and opinions (Harmer, 2004). After drafting a text, the writer should review it to ensure its clarity and coherence. A strong command of grammar and rhetoric, including the ability to arrange words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs effectively, is essential for producing quality writing (Wijaya, 2014).

Teachers, therefore, need to be fully equipped with the skills to teach these language abilities, especially writing. As emphasized by Putra et al. (2023), the reasons for teaching writing to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students include reinforcement, language development, learning style, and writing as a skill. Reinforcement involves learning the spoken language, while language development focuses on organizing thoughts and exploring the language through writing. Students also benefit from learning styles that incorporate visual and auditory elements, and writing helps them articulate their ideas before they speak. Writing is a critical skill, enabling students to perform essential tasks such as drafting reports, emails, and letters.

Among the various text genres that students must master—such as narrative, descriptive, and procedural texts—recount text holds particular importance in the Indonesian EFL curriculum (Putra et al., 2023). Recount text focuses on narrating past experiences or events and requires students to understand its specific goals, organizational structures, and linguistic devices. It is closely related to narrative text but is distinct in its purpose and content. Wisdhawan and Kumalarini (2014) describe recount text as a narrative that details events from the past, which can include personal accounts like diaries and letters, imaginative recounts, scientific studies, or news articles.

Despite its importance, writing is often considered one of the most challenging language skills, even in one's native language (Tessema, 2019). Writing requires a high level of cognitive focus and the ability to use language structures accurately and effectively. Effective writing involves various stages, such as drafting, revising, and editing, which demand specific strategies to enhance clarity and coherence

(Karolina, 2020). Recent research also highlights the continued difficulty students face in mastering these skills, particularly when dealing with complex text types like recounts (Putri & Mahendra, 2021; Sari et al., 2022).

At WR. Supratman 2 Senior High School, a trilingual institution teaching Bahasa Indonesia, English, and Mandarin, students also face challenges in writing recount texts, despite its inclusion in the curriculum for tenth and twelfth grades. As a school that emphasizes high-quality education with competent teaching staff, WR. Supratman 2 aims to produce students who are well-rounded and capable of competing nationally and internationally. However, like many students in similar educational contexts, students at WR. Supratman 2 struggle with writing recount texts.

This study seeks to analyze the specific difficulties students face when writing recount texts and to examine the underlying reasons for these challenges. Recent studies suggest that these difficulties often stem from a lack of understanding of grammatical structures, limited vocabulary, and insufficient practice in the genre-specific conventions of recount texts (Ariyanti & Fitriana, 2017; Oktavia et al., 2021). By understanding the nature and causes of these difficulties, this research aims to contribute to the development of more effective teaching strategies that can enhance students' writing skills in recount texts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

When given a text to write, the majority of students challenges run into four issues such as content, organizing, vocabulary and grammar (Elanneri Karani, 2008). The first is content, which indicated that because the students are unable to organize the main concept and the supporting details into a paragraph, they are unable to write an effective structure. The second one involves planning, which means the student cannot organize multiple information into a good paragraph. Third is vocabulary where the students who are lack in vocabulary find it difficult to write well-structured paragraph so that make the students failed to convey their ideas and opinions smoothly. However, this won't always be the case, since the students who grew up reading English books and watching English shows are most likely not hindered by this problem. The fourth one and the one that most likely encountered by most people is grammar. A well-written text clarifies sentence structure and the paragraphs' word choice. In the other words, the students have numerous challenges when they are writing recount text. Their issues are primarily with writing techniques, and they typically lack the vocabulary and grammar knowledge.

Writing recount text is one of the forms in writing text. Teachers taught this skill to help students narrate the stories about experience. Recount text is also employed for reporting real-world occurrences. However, even though they only write simple sentences, a lot of students still struggle while writing recount text. In addition, the cause that influence why most students find it difficult to write

recount text sentences is most teachers do not use effective methods to teach writing recount text which makes the students feel bored during the learning process. Teaching writing recount text is known as one of most challenging teaching practice. In order to enhance the writers' abilities, it is considered for teachers to employ strategies, tactics, or approaches that can be applied to teach writing in English sentences. One learning strategy that is seen quite interesting is the example-non-example strategy, which uses image or image illustrations. Learning by using this method will be particularly helpful to explain a concept especially in writing recount text, with the media image representations.

METHOD

Design and Samples

In this study, researchers used qualitative method. The research will take place at WR. Supratman 2 Senior High School, which can be found at Jl. Brigjend Zein Hamid No.33, Titi Kuning, Kec. Medan Johor, Kota Medan, Sumatera Utara. Purposive samples are used by the researcher because they were thought to be sufficient to yield the greatest amount of insight and comprehension. At WR Supratman 2 Senior High School, two English teachers and eleven students were expected to get the required data. Depending on the participants' familiarity with the phenomenon, the researcher may select them using his/her own discretion (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009).

Instruments and Procedures

There are three instruments used in this research, they are observation, written test, and interview. The teaching and learning process of writing recount text in the classroom is observed thoroughly with the help of the observation note, this will help determining which strategies the teacher used in teaching writing recount text. After the data needed are collected through observation, the writer instructed the students to written test and interview session. The theme of the story in the writing test is about their last holiday and they have to finish their stories in 40 minutes. After the students have done the written test, the answer sheets are collected to the writer and will be analyzed. The focus of the writer is to find out the structure of the text, the word choice, grammatical error, and misspell. The last step is the interview session. The writer interviewed 11 students and 2 teachers at WR. Supratman 2 School as the participants to gain more information about their difficulties in writing recount test.

Data Analysis

In writing a text, there's always a generic structure of each kind of the text. The generic structure is the general form of a genre in which each genre has its own

generic structure (Paltridge in Sartika, 2019). The generic structures of recount text are orientation, the events, and the re-orientation. Orientation which usually located in the first paragraph of the text is to give the information of the story. The event is the sequence of the stories and re-orientation is usually located in the last paragraph to give the message for the readers. In this research, the writer has chosen to use surface structure taxonomy by Politzer and A. Ramirez to analyze the data. Steps that will be done by the writer in this research are as follow:

1. Collecting the written test.
2. Identifying the errors by reading the text.
3. Classify the errors found based on Politzer and A. Ramirez's theory.
4. Describing the errors that the writer has found.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Observation Result

Based on the class observation, here are some responses shown by the students:

1. **Perceptual Response**
Most of the students had shown good responses which could be seen by all students who collected their tasks. Most of the students are able to write the text with right structure of and able to choose the vocabularies well.
2. **Emotional Response**
Emotional responses that was shown by the students when they were learning English was when the teacher hasn't started the class, the class wasn't conducive, all of the students were busy with their own activities. But when the teacher has started the class, everybody is focus with the teachers. It means, there's willingness from each student to learn English.
3. **Behaviour Response**
Pre-test is given to the students before the class starts. By giving the pre-test, we are able to know the behaviour responses of the students. If the students show that they understand about the previous topic, the teacher may continue to the next topic. But if the students reject that the cause might be because they don't understand about the topic so they got low scores for the pre-test, the teacher may explain first as the review for the students.

Written Test Result

The research was conducted with WR. Supratman 2 Senior High School students. There are 13 informants that consist of 11 students and 2 teachers. The data with the students was collected through observation, written test, and interview. The data with the teachers was collected through interview.

Table 1 The total and percentage of mistakes in surface structure taxonomy

No.	Category	Total Mistake	Percentage
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1	Omission	83	57%
2	Addition	30	20%
3	Misformation	34	23%
4	Misordering	0	0%
	Total	147	100%

Based on the surface structure taxonomy data, here are the mistakes made by the students in writing recount text:

1. Omission

The writer found from the data analysis that difficulties in using past tense was the main problem for students in writing recount text which talk about things happened in the past. Most students used the wrong form of past tense. Here are the examples of mistakes made by the students:

- a. Student C: *And then my mother and her family planning to go to Danau Toba*

From the sentence by student C above, we know that we need to put to-be every time we use V-ing. Since the sentence was talking something happened in the past, the sentence could be change into *And then my mother and family planned to go to Lake Toba*

- b. Student H: *That day, lots of tears falling from my father's family eyes.* From the sentence by student H, we know that he told about something happened at the time before the time he was talking. The sentence supposed to be: *That day, lots of tears were falling down from my father's family eyes.*

2. Addition

Addition found in some students' written test. Addition happens when the students add unnecessary word(s).

- a. Student J: *So I got more happier when I saw handsome man.*

Happier is the superlative sentence of the word "happy" which means the happiness we feel is more than the usual. From this, we don't need to write "more" before the word "happier". The sentence supposed to be: *So I got happier when I saw handsome man.*

- b. Student H: *At the night, my family and I were getting ready.*

Article "the" is used when we want to write "in the morning", "in the afternoon", and "in the evening". We don't use article "the" at night. The sentence supposed to be: *At night, my family and I were getting ready.*

- c. Student N: *We 're played game.*

To-be is used when we want to use the progressive tenses which followed by V-ing afterwards. Since the story tells about something happened in the past, we don't need to put

to-be before the past simpleverb. The sentence supposed to be: *We played game.*

3. Misformation

a. Student C: *For them work in Jambi such as enjoy*

We can use “enjoyable” rather than such as enjoy to avoid the misunderstanding in the text. The suggested correction: *For them work inJambi is enjoyable.*

b. Student S: *During school holiday, I don't go on holiday with my family.*

From the sentence by student J above, the sentence supposed to be written with past form since recount text is talking about event that

finished in the past. The correct sentence supposed to be:

During schoolholiday, I didn't go on holiday with my family.

Interview Result

The research was conducted with WR. Supratman 2 Senior High School students and teachers. There are 13 informants that consist of 11 students and 2 teachers.

Table 3.2 Writing Recount Text Difficulty Based on Students' Opinion

Students	Difficulty
Mario	Medium
Hubert	Medium
Jessie	Medium
Cecil	Hard
Joshua	Hard
Kirani	Hard
Ruth	Medium
Harvyan	Hard
Muchtia	Hard
Sinta	Hard
Nathania	Medium

Table 3.3 Hardest Part of Writing Recount Text.

Students	Hardest Part
Mario	Grammar

Hubert	Grammar
Jessie	Grammar
Cecil	Grammar
Joshua	Grammar
Kirani	Grammar
Ruth	Grammar
Harvyan	Grammar
Muchtia	Grammar
Sinta	Grammar & Vocabulary
Nathania	Vocabulary

Most of the students' find grammar as the most difficult part of writing recount text, two of the students also have some problem with vocabulary while writing recount text.

Table 3.4 Student' Strategies on Learning Writing Recount Text.

Students	Strategies
Mario	Think about the idea first and then just try to write as you remember it
Hubert	Write in Indonesian first then we translate it into English
Jessie	Think about something just to write it down immediately
Cecil	Make in Indonesian language and translate it into English
Joshua	Google Translate
Kirani	Using Indonesian language and translate it into English
Ruth	Understand the grammar better
Harvyan	Google Translate
Muchtia	Dictionary and Google Translate
Sinta	Google Translate
Nathania	Learning Vocabulary

The students have various ways of learning writing recount text by themselves. 2 students write the first idea they got immediately, 3 students write the sentences in Bahasa Indonesia first then translate them to English afterwards, 2 students study grammar and vocabulary more to improve their ability to write recount text, and 4 students use Google Translate to make it easier for them.

Table 3.5 Strategy used by teacher to teach writing recount text.

Teachers	Strategy used to teach writing recount text
Tony	Communicated Language Teaching which primarily focus on the interaction in the classroom
Montessori	Technology based learning such as presenting PowerPoint and Youtube Videos. Work-learning, group-learning, lecture based-learning. It all depends on the class, the students' knowledge level.

Table 3.6 Students' problems on writing recount text.

Teachers	Students' Problem
Tony	Students come from different background of learning English. Some are very good but others are fall behind. When teaching recount text, it's hard to expect their idea or we can say from content aspect also with their structural aspect is also problem for them
Montessori	Most of all Indonesian students cannot distinguish between verb 1 and verb 2. they always make the same mistake in simple present and simple past. They can't use, I mean, most of them can't distinguish how to use verb 1 and verb 2 in the correct way. For example, let me tell you something what I did yesterday, it means that we have to use simple past right? For 1 sentence, 2 sentences, or 3 sentences they are right. But for the next sentence in 1 paragraph, they make always, at least 1 or 2 mistakes in tenses especially. The main problem is diction. Diction how to choose the correct word to express what they have in their mind. I think that's the main problem

The findings from this study indicate that students at WR. Supratman 2 Senior High School face several challenges when writing recount texts in English, with grammar emerging as the primary difficulty. This observation aligns with previous studies that have highlighted grammar as a significant barrier in writing for English as a

Foreign Language (EFL) learners. For instance, Ariyanti (2016) found that Indonesian students frequently struggle with grammatical accuracy when writing in English, often leading to errors in verb usage and sentence structure. The current study expands on these findings by providing a detailed analysis of the types of errors—omission, addition, and misformation—observed in recount texts.

The surface structure taxonomy analysis shows that omission errors, particularly in the use of the past tense, are the most common (57%), followed by misformation (23%) and addition (20%). These results are consistent with the findings of Farrokhi and Sattarpour (2012), who reported that tense-related errors are prevalent among EFL learners due to insufficient exposure and practice in using the past tense forms accurately. This suggests that the students' difficulties may stem from a lack of familiarity with the correct grammatical rules and inadequate reinforcement in classroom settings.

Interestingly, the study also identifies a unique behavioral pattern among students when approaching writing tasks. Most students either translate from Bahasa Indonesia to English or rely on translation tools such as Google Translate. This reliance on translation tools is not unique to the current study. Warschauer and Grimes (2007) found that EFL learners frequently use online translation tools to compensate for their lack of proficiency, particularly in complex grammatical structures. However, while such tools may provide immediate solutions, they do not necessarily enhance the learners' understanding of grammatical rules, leading to repeated errors.

In terms of emotional responses, students demonstrated varying levels of engagement depending on the classroom environment. When the teacher initiated lessons, students showed a willingness to focus, suggesting that teacher-student interactions significantly influence student motivation and engagement (Dörnyei, 2014). This finding underscores the importance of the teacher's role in creating a conducive learning environment that encourages active participation and reduces anxiety related to language learning, which has been documented as a critical factor affecting language acquisition (Krashen, 1982).

The study also reveals that vocabulary poses a secondary challenge for some students, with two students specifically identifying it as the most difficult aspect of writing recount texts. This aligns with the findings of Schmitt (2008), who argued that vocabulary acquisition is a crucial component of language learning, particularly in writing tasks that require precise word choice to convey meaning accurately. The students' strategies, such as using dictionaries or memorizing vocabulary, reflect common practices observed in other contexts (Nation, 2013). However, these strategies may not be sufficient to address deeper issues related to lexical knowledge, such as collocation and word formation.

Furthermore, the teachers' strategies for teaching recount texts appear varied, with one teacher employing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and another

integrating technology-based learning. Previous studies have shown that combining these methods can be effective in enhancing students' writing skills (Hyland, 2013; Harmer, 2015). However, the reliance on traditional methods such as lecture-based learning, as observed in the current study, may not fully address the diverse needs of students who come from different backgrounds and possess varying levels of English proficiency.

The findings suggest several implications for practice. Firstly, there is a need for targeted grammar instruction that focuses on the specific areas where students commonly make errors. Research by Ellis (2006) suggests that explicit grammar teaching, combined with meaningful practice, can significantly improve learners' grammatical accuracy. Additionally, integrating technology, such as automated feedback tools, could provide students with immediate corrections and explanations, helping them understand and internalize grammatical rules more effectively (Choi & Li, 2012).

Secondly, the study highlights the importance of fostering student autonomy in language learning. While many students rely on translation tools, they should be encouraged to develop their own language skills through more interactive and communicative activities that promote self-expression and reduce dependence on external aids. As recommended by Littlewood (2011), a focus on developing learners' strategic competence—knowing how to learn and use the language—can enhance their overall language proficiency and confidence in writing.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the existing literature by providing a nuanced understanding of the specific challenges faced by Indonesian EFL learners in writing recount texts. It confirms that grammar remains the most significant obstacle, compounded by issues with vocabulary and inadequate instructional strategies. To address these challenges, educators should consider adopting a more balanced approach that incorporates explicit grammar instruction, technology-based feedback, and learner autonomy. Future research could explore the effectiveness of such interventions in different educational contexts to further validate these findings and develop more comprehensive strategies for improving EFL writing skills.

CONCLUSION

The writer discovered that their inadequate language knowledge and poor grammar were the main obstacles they faced when creating recount texts, based on the data analysis in the preceding chapter. Based on the statistics, the author also discovered that the majority of students still require translation from Bahasa Indonesia into English, which prevents them from being truly fluent in the language. This has also contributed to the students' perception that grammar is the most challenging aspect of producing recount texts since it makes them feel as though it is hard to compose the narrative and they are unable to enjoy their writing time. Besides that, the students still give their good responses to English subject. There's no rejection from

the students so far for the English subject even there are some parts that make them hard to understand the topics in learning English. Since grammar is the primary obstacle that the majority of students encounter when producing recount texts, the writer would like to make some recommendations based on the research for teachers to devote more time and attention to teaching it. In order for the students to fully comprehend the materials, the writers also suggest that they pay closer attention while the teacher presents the subject. In order to fully comprehend the English language, students also recommended reading, watching, and listening to more English-language content.

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