INVESTIGATING STUDENTS' PROFICIENCY AND CHALLENGES IN WRITING RECOUNT TEXTS: STUDENTS' PERCEPTION

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Abstract:
This study investigates the proficiency of tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 10 Surabaya in writing recount texts, focusing on four key indicators: organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. The research employs a descriptive qualitative method to analyze students' writing tasks based on criteria from Megawati and Mirjam. The findings reveal that students excel in organization and mechanics, with mean scores of 24 and 11, respectively, both classified as 'Good.' However, vocabulary and grammar were identified as areas needing significant improvement, with mean scores of 14 and 18, categorized as 'Fair.' The study highlights that while students effectively structure their texts and manage mechanics well, they face challenges in grammar, particularly with past tense usage and vocabulary, impacting their ability to convey ideas clearly. Questionnaire data supports these findings, showing that while 85% of students enjoy writing recount texts, 30% encounter difficulties related to coherence and language use. Addressing these issues through targeted grammar and vocabulary instruction is crucial for enhancing overall writing quality. The study aims to inform pedagogical practices and improve students' proficiency in writing recount texts.

Keywords: *Recount Text, Students' Perception, Writing Proficiency and Challenges*

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is a method of producing language and conveying ideas, feelings, and opinions. Harmer (2004) described writing as a skill centered on language production, which requires a certain intellectual or expressive level. This process is taught in both schools and universities. Writing is crucial but also the most challenging aspect of language learning for students, as it requires mastery. In addition, Brown (2001) emphasized that writing is a cognitive process that can be planned and revised multiple times before finalization. Students need to be proficient in expressing themselves in English, both orally and in writing. In an educational context, writing is often considered more complex than other skills, demanding greater concentration, critical thinking, and extended learning time.

However, Rass (2001) explains that the difficulty arises from the complexity of various writing elements, such as content, organization, purpose, vocabulary, and punctuation. Writing involves the demanding task of generating ideas, deciding how to express them, and organizing them into clear and coherent sentences and paragraphs. Therefore, there is a need to improve the writing quality of students.

The purpose of English lessons in senior high school, according to the Learning Outcomes (known as 'Capaian Pembelajaran') of the 'Merdeka Curriculum', students are expected to develop their skills in writing various texts, including retellings, as one of the competencies they are expected to master. Writing is one of the competencies that students must master. Therefore, students in senior high school should be able to understand and produce short functional monologue and basic monologue texts with various characteristics such as social functions, general structure, and linguistic elements to fulfill curricular objectives, particularly in writing.

In relation to what the curriculum stated, students are required to write various types of texts, including recount texts. A recount text narrates an experience, aiming to inform the reader about past events by following a chronological sequence (Matondang, 2020). Cogan (as cited in Sari et al., 2013) describes a recount text as a written piece intended to enlighten or entertain the audience. Therefore, students are expected to convey events or experiences in a way that informs or entertains readers through their writing.

In addition, perception theory, as explained by Andrej Demuth (2013), describes perception as the process of acquiring and processing information. Perception involves gathering information through sensory receptors such as the eyes, ears, nose, and skin and transforming it into a coherent understanding of what one thinks, sees, hears, smells, tastes, or touches. According to Arrionto (cited in Walgito, 2003), perception is the process by which humans think about certain phenomena, which is closely related to how the brain receives and interprets information. Understanding how students perceive their writing abilities and challenges provides deeper insights into their learning process and can inform more effective teaching strategies.

However, mastering English writing skills is particularly challenging for learners in Indonesia, where English is a foreign language. According to Harmer (2004), many EFL learners find English writing difficult. Students need to think creatively when developing their texts and pay close attention to grammatical accuracy. Given that writing is a complex process, crafting recount texts poses a significant problem for students. A study conducted in 2014 by Allieni Harris, Mohd. Ansyar and Desmawati Radjab, with tenth-grade students at SMAN 1 Sungai Limau, found that students' ability to write recount texts was categorized as low. The students struggled with using appropriate language features and correct grammar in their writing. These difficulties were attributed to challenges in applying correct grammar and structure, limited vocabulary, and confusion about organizing paragraphs within recount texts (Harris et al., 2014).

Besides that, in previous research conducted by Mutia Shalihah in 2021, eight-grade students of class F of MTs Pembangunan UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta are in the good category. However, based on the writing result, students have some problems with writing Recount Text. Some errors were found in the students' writing and it was identified that the students made the most mistakes in the aspects of language use and mechanics. In other words, students are facing difficulties and have not really mastered those 2 aspects of writing. These issues align with Ngabut's findings, as cited by Yulianawati (2017), which identified content, organization, vocabulary, and grammar as the four most common problems in writing. Additionally, the researcher observed similar writing challenges among students during her teaching practice at SMAN 10 Surabaya.

Understanding students' proficiency levels and the obstacles they face in recount text composition is crucial for educators to tailor effective teaching strategies. Equally important is gaining insight into students' perceptions of their own writing abilities and the difficulties they encounter. By exploring students' perspectives, educators can gain

valuable insights into the factors influencing students' writing experiences and tailor instructional approaches accordingly.

In conclusion, given the previous discussion and the importance of understanding students' ability to overcome the challenges they face in writing retell texts. By incorporating students' perceptions, this study aims to inform pedagogical practices that can foster students' writing skills and promote their academic success. Thus, the researcher decided to conduct a study entitled "Investigating Students' Proficiency and Challenges in Writing Recount Texts: Students' Perception".

2. METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method. According to Fraenkel et al., (2012) the qualitative method is a type of approach that examines the quality of relationships, activities, conditions, or materials. This method focuses on exploring issues and gaining a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). In summary, qualitative research aims to describe problems or situations in detail through verbal explanations.

For this research, the participants were tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 10 Surabaya, specifically from class I. The study employed a descriptive qualitative research approach to assess students' proficiency and challenges in writing recount texts. Data were primarily collected from students' writing tasks, which were analyzed according to the criteria established by Megawati and Mirjam. Additionally, supplementary data were gathered through semi-closed-ended questionnaires, providing insights into students' perceptions and the difficulties they faced. This approach aimed to comprehensively understand the students' writing challenges and the factors influencing their performance in recount text writing.

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The specification of the students' writing results of the four indicators according to Megawati and Mirjam criteria are as follows:

Table 1. The Students' Mean Score of the Four Indicators

No.	Indicators	Result	Category
1.	Organization	24	Good
2.	Vocabulary	14	Fair
3.	Grammar	18	Fair
4.	Mechanic	11	Good

The mean score for the organization is 24, which falls into the 'Good' category. This suggests that most students did not encounter significant issues with the organization in their recount text writing. Organization is crucial in writing recount texts, as it includes orientation, events, and re-orientation. The researcher has displayed an example made by students in Table 2.

Table 2. Sample of the Students' Way in Organizing their Writing Recount Text

Orientation	Holiday At Home One week ago, we went on holiday to Tulungagung by bus. The trip from Surabaya to Tulungagung takes Four Hours.
Event	After arriving at the Tulungagung terminal, my brother picked me up. At Home we shake hands to apologize to grandmother, parents, siblings, I also stay in touch with heigh bors. Grandma gave me and my sister money.
Re-orientation	My Family and I are very Happy

The mean score for vocabulary is 14, which falls into the 'Fair' category. This indicates that students need to pay more attention to their vocabulary. Mastery of vocabulary is crucial in writing recount texts because if students do not choose words effectively, their writing can become difficult to understand. The researcher has displayed examples of mistakes made by students in Table 3. According to the table:

Table 3. Samples of Students' Vocabulary Mistakes

The Wrong Vocabularies	The Right Vocabularies
1. My activities before Eid yesterday l am helping my mother to make **a cookies** for Eid 2. School holiday start **at** 5 March 2024 3. I also stay in touch with **heigh bors** 4. The most **engoyable** thing is, when sahur and breaking the fast together Eid al-Fitr arrived, many families **arrived**	1. My activities before Eid yesterday l am helping my mother to make **cookies** for Eid 2. School holiday start **on** 5 March 2024 3. I also stay in touch with **neighbors** 4. The most **enjoyable** thing is, when sahur and breaking the fast together Eid al-Fitr arrived, and many families **gathered**

The mean score for grammar is 18, which falls into the 'Fair' category. This indicates that grammar is an area where students face challenges. Grammar is crucial in writing recount texts because incorrect grammar usage can lead to misinterpretation of the ideas by readers. Therefore, students need to improve their grammar knowledge to enhance their writing quality. Based on the research findings, the researcher identified several grammar mistakes made by students. According to the table:

Table 4. Samples of Students' Grammar Mistakes

Incorrect	Correct
1. My activities before Eid yesterday **l am** helping my mother to make a cookies for Eid 2. I usually **go** with my father, sister, grandfather, and uncle	1. My activities before Eid yesterday **l** helped my mother to make cookies for Eid 2. I usually **went** with my father, sister, grandfather, and uncle

3. The trip from Surabaya to Tulungagung **takes** four hours 4. After this, I **prepare for** go to the village 5. After eating together, parents **will distributed** Eid money to the children	3. The trip from Surabaya to Tulungagung **took** four hours 4. After that, I **prepared to** go to the village 5. After eating together, parents **distributed** Eid money to the children

The mean score for mechanics is 11, which falls into the 'Good' category. This indicates that most students do not have serious issues with mechanics. Mechanics is an essential aspect of writing recount texts, as it helps ensure that readers can easily and clearly understand the ideas presented. Some mistakes related to mechanics made by students can be viewed in Table 5. According to the table:

Table 5. Sample of Mistakes on Mechanic

Incorrect	Correct
1. I do **lot's** of quality time in this Ramadan 2. **Theres** also lots of food and pastries were prepared 3. I also help my parents to wrap THR for give to **childern**	1. I do **lots** of quality time in this Ramadan 2. **There's** also lots of food and pastries were prepared 3. I also help my parents to wrap THR to give to **children**

In this study, the researcher used a semi-closed questionnaire to collect data. The questionnaire was based on the writing criteria of Jacob et al. (1981) to answer the research question. It contains 9 questions, including questions about students' understanding of writing recount text, such as topic, paragraph, language use, ideas, arranging sentences, and mechanics. Through this questionnaire, the students' problems in writing Recount text could be identified. The result of the questionnaire can be seen in the table below:

Table 6. The Frequency and Percentage of Questionnaire Results

No.	Question	Percentage (%)	
		Yes	No
1.	Do you enjoy writing Recount Text? (*Apakah anda menyukai menulis Recount Text?*)	85%	15%
	Give reasons for the answer you choose! (*Berikan alasan atas jawaban yang Anda pilih*)	85% of students enjoy writing recount texts, mainly because they find it engaging and a good way to express their personal experiences, while 15%	

		do not enjoy it due to difficulties in organizing their thoughts.	
2.	Do you understand the concept of Recount Text that has been taught? (*Apakah anda memahami materi Recount Text yang telah diajarkan?*)	80%	20%
	Give reasons for the answer you choose! (*Berikan alasan atas jawaban yang Anda pilih*)	80% of students understand the concept of recount texts, attributing this to clear instruction, while 20% still struggle with the structure and content.	
3.	Do you have difficulties in writing Recount Text? (*Apakah anda kesulitan dalam menulis Recount Text?*)	30%	70%
	Give reasons for the answer you choose! (*Berikan alasan atas jawaban yang Anda pilih*)	30% of students find writing recount texts challenging, particularly in maintaining coherence and appropriate language, while 70% feel confident in their writing skills.	
4.	Do you get difficulties in developing topic that has been given? (*Apakah anda kesulitan dalam mengembangkan topik yang telah diberikan?*)	25%	75%
	Give reasons for the answer you choose! (*Berikan alasan atas jawaban yang Anda pilih*)	25% of students experience difficulty in developing the given topics, often due to limited ideas, while 75% do not find it challenging.	
5.	Do you get difficulties in expressing ideas in writing Recount Text? (*Apakah Anda mengalami kesulitan dalam mengekspresikan ide dalam menulis recount text?*)	13%	87%
	Give reasons for the answer you choose! (*Berikan alasan atas jawaban yang Anda pilih*)	13% of students struggle with expressing their ideas clearly in recount texts, primarily due to limited vocabulary, while 87% feel they can express themselves effectively.	
6.	Do you have difficulties in organizing paragraphs of Recount	35%	65%

	Text? (*Apakah anda kesulitan dalam menyusun paragraf recount text?*)		
	Give reasons for the answer you choose! (*Berikan alasan atas jawaban yang Anda pilih*)	35% of students find it difficult to organize paragraphs logically in recount texts, while 65% are comfortable with this aspect of writing.	
7.	Do you have difficulties in using the right language in writing Recount Text? (*Apakah anda kesulitan dalam menggunakan Bahasa yang tepat ketika menulis recount text?*)	30%	70%
	Give reasons for the answer you choose! (*Berikan alasan atas jawaban yang Anda pilih*)	30% of students have difficulty using the appropriate language in recount texts, mostly due to challenges in selecting the right words, while 70% do not face such issues.	
8.	Do you know how to use grammar when writing Recount Text? (*Apakah anda mengetahui penggunaan grammar pada recount teks?*)	63%	37%
	Give reasons for the answer you choose! (*Berikan alasan atas jawaban yang Anda pilih*)	63% of students are aware of the grammar rules in recount texts, yet 37% still struggle with applying these rules consistently.	
9.	Do you get difficulties using the right grammar and mechanics in writing Recount Text? (*Apakah anda kesulitan dalam menggunakan grammar yang tepat ketika menulis Recount Text?*)	40%	60%
	Give reasons for the answer you choose! (*Berikan alasan atas jawaban yang Anda pilih*)	40% of students find it difficult to use correct grammar and mechanics in recount texts, especially with tense consistency, while 60% do not encounter these difficulties.	

The analysis of the questionnaire reveals key insights into students' experiences with writing recount texts. A significant majority, 85%, enjoy writing recount texts due to their engaging nature and ability to express personal experiences, while 15% find it challenging due to organizational issues. Regarding understanding, 80% grasp the

concept of recount texts, though 20% still struggle with structure and content. Only 30% experience difficulties in writing recount texts, with challenges often related to coherence and language, whereas 70% are confident in their skills. Difficulty in topic development affects 25% of students, while 75% find it manageable. Expressing ideas is a challenge for 13% of students, primarily due to limited vocabulary, but 87% manage to articulate their ideas effectively. Organizational issues affect 40% of students, indicating difficulties in structuring paragraphs, while 60% are comfortable with this aspect. Language use poses challenges for 30% of students, particularly in word choice, while 70% do not face such problems. Awareness of grammar rules is high at 63%, though 37% struggle with consistent application. Lastly, 40% have difficulties with grammar and mechanics, especially with tense consistency, while 60% do not encounter significant issues.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the study, it can be concluded that the tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 10 Surabaya show satisfactory proficiency in organization and mechanics when writing recount texts, with mean scores in these areas classified as 'Good.' However, grammar and vocabulary remain significant challenges, with mean scores rated as 'Fair,' indicating a need for further improvement. The findings suggest that students are generally capable of organizing their ideas and managing basic writing mechanics but struggle with grammar, particularly in the use of past tense and vocabulary, which affects their clarity in expressing ideas. These challenges, corroborated by questionnaire data, reveal that while students have a positive attitude toward recount writing, they continue to face issues with coherence and language precision.

To address these areas, it is recommended that teachers incorporate focused grammar exercises, especially on past tense forms, and vocabulary-building activities to enhance students' language skills. Additionally, integrating peer review sessions may help students recognize coherence issues and improve clarity in their writing. For future research, exploring the impact of digital tools or interactive platforms on grammar and vocabulary acquisition could offer new insights and support students' proficiency development. Finally, students are encouraged to engage in regular writing practice and self-reflection to become more confident and skilled in writing recount texts.

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