

WRITING PERFORMANCE OF ELEVENTH GRADE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study aims to measure the writing ability of eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Parigi. A descriptive qualitative research design was used. The research subjects consisted of 10 eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Parigi. Data were analyzed from students' writing worksheets. The researcher analyzed and described the students' descriptive texts based on content and organization aspects. The study results showed that the majority of students' writing (60%) was at the good level, 20% at the very good level, and the rest at the poor level. These findings indicate that students are able to write descriptive texts well in terms of content and organization. Based on these results, it is recommended that teachers maintain the writing teaching strategies that have been implemented.

Keywords: Descriptive Text, Writing Performance, Senior High School Students.

BACKGROUND

Descriptive text is a text that clearly describes the characteristics of people, animals, plants, and inanimate objects as form, characters, amount, etc. (Lubis, 2024; Sinaga, 2022). The purpose of this text is to provide clear information about the object being described to the reader. The descriptive text has a generic structure and language features. Generic structure refers to the stage of information contained in the text as identification and description, and Language features refer to sentence structure, punctuation, nouns, vocabulary, phrases, etc. (Sipayung et al., 2021). Based on the explanation above, descriptive text is a text that describes an object that has a generic structure and language features.

In addition, the problem that students face is the difficulty in writing English. Descriptive is a text that students find difficult when they create descriptive writing. According to students' opinions, they do not know what to write, cannot develop ideas, students find it challenging to use grammar, and lack vocabulary and mechanics (Amalia et al., 2021).

Vocabulary is one of the crucial elements in learning English (Syafrizal & Haerudin, 2018). Mastering vocabulary will make it easier for students to understand English and support them in mastering other language components. Rai et al. (2011) argue that language comprehension and production are hampered by this limitation. To increase interest and motivation in learning vocabulary, teachers are expected to apply varied teaching strategies and ensure the accuracy of teaching methods.

Based on the 2013 curriculum, students are expected to be able to understand the social functions, structure, and language features of descriptive text. Furthermore, several basic competencies of the 2013 curriculum syllabus mention that capturing meaning in spoken and written descriptive as being texts is included in learning. In this curriculum, applying language features and generic structure in descriptive text includes identifying, understanding, compiling text, and giving and asking for information about particular objects, whether the object is a person, place, event, or feeling, in detail and

clearly. In addition, students are expected to be able to express their ideas through writing on topics given by the teachers. Students are also expected to read and listen to the text to understand the content of the message and how students express their ideas by using the components of writing well.

Regarding the goal of learning on the syllabus, students must be able to write descriptive texts based on writing components such as organization, content, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. In organizing ideas, students can use brainstorming and pre-writing techniques designed to bring subconscious ideas into conscious ideas. In addition, students can also develop ideas by making lists, in which they have to record ideas that are directly related to specific subjects and read a lot so that there are many references in developing ideas. In determining ideas, active readers will tend to have a lot of creative ideas, making it easier for students to do writing activities, while passive readers tend to have a lack of vocabulary, so they rush through reading to get it done. In writing content, the body of paragraphs and topic sentences must be considered; in vocabulary, students must master much vocabulary in order to write correctly; in grammar, students need to pay attention to verbs and tenses; in mechanics, students must be able to write punctuation, capitalization, and spelling correctly. By mastering the components of writing, students can write well and correctly.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher wants to find out the writing performance in the descriptive text of the eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Parigi in organizing and developing ideas and content in descriptive texts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing Performance

Writing performance is a complex language skill involving various cognitive and linguistic aspects. This ability is not

merely stringing words together into sentences but also involves thinking processes, organizing ideas, and mastering grammar and vocabulary to convey messages effectively (Carvalhais et al., 2021). Previous studies have consistently shown that writing performance is influenced by various factors, ranging from student motivation and teaching strategies used by teachers to the learning environment (Nabhan & Sa'diyah, 2021; Purnamasari et al., 2021; Suastra & Menggo, 2020; Vacalares et al., 2023).

According to Hyland (2003), writing performance in second language learners is the result of a complex interaction between linguistic knowledge (grammar, vocabulary, spelling), rhetorical knowledge (text organization, genre), and cognitive processes (planning, drafting, revising). He argues that difficulties in writing are often not only due to a lack of linguistic knowledge but also due to a lack of strategies for managing ideas and organizing them into coherent texts.

According to Hyland (2003), writing performance in second language learners results from a complex interplay of linguistic and rhetorical knowledge alongside cognitive processes. Hyland (2003) posits that writing challenges often stem not only from linguistic gaps but also from deficits in managing and structuring ideas into cohesive texts. Therefore, a comprehensive approach to teaching writing should address these multiple facets, equipping students with the necessary linguistic tools and cognitive strategies to enhance their writing proficiency (Dunn, 2021; Jiang & Kalyuga, 2022).

Furthermore, Richards and Renandya (2002) emphasize the crucial role of effective teacher feedback in enhancing students' writing performance. Constructive feedback aids students in pinpointing weaknesses and offers direction for refinement. Conversely, unclear or overly critical feedback may diminish students' motivation to write (Steiss et al., 2024).

Variability in writing performance is also often associated with affective aspects. Krashen (1985), with his Affective Filter Hypothesis, states that anxiety and motivation levels can affect how effectively learners acquire language. In the context of writing, students with high anxiety levels may find it difficult to express their ideas freely, which ultimately affects their writing performance.

Descriptive Text

Descriptive text is one of the basic types of text taught in the English curriculum to describe something, be it people, places, objects, or experiences, in clear and vivid detail so that readers can imagine it (Maulana & Sibarani, 2021). Mastery of descriptive text is an important foundation before students move on to more complex text genres. However, students often face challenges in descriptive writing, particularly in employing varied and precise vocabulary to create sensory details and in adhering to grammatical accuracy, especially in adjective usage and sentence construction (Kristiana et al., 2021; Nurfidoh & Kareviati, 2021). Effective instruction should address both cognitive and affective dimensions, fostering a supportive environment that encourages experimentation and risk-taking. (Acedo, 2020) Furthermore, teaching should encourage students to consider their audience and the desired effect of their descriptions, prompting them to make deliberate choices about language and structure.

Gerot and Wignell (1994) explain that descriptive texts have a distinctive generic structure, namely 'Identification' (introduction of the object to be described) and 'Description' (detailed explanation of the characteristics of the object). This structure is important to ensure that the description is presented in an orderly manner and is easy for readers to understand. In addition to generic structure, language features in descriptive texts are also crucial

elements. As outlined by Feez (1999) in Text-based Syllabus Design, descriptive texts are rich in adjectives, action verbs, and prepositional phrases that serve to provide sensory and spatial details. The use of the simple present tense is also every day because descriptive texts usually describe permanent facts or characteristics.

Research on descriptive text learning often highlights students' difficulties in using appropriate and varied vocabulary to create vivid descriptions, as well as in applying correct grammar, especially in the use of adjectives and sentence construction. Horwitz (2020) argues that to master a particular genre; students need sufficient exposure and meaningful practice opportunities. Therefore, teaching descriptive texts should involve not only theory but also plenty of practical exercises and targeted feedback.

Writing Descriptive Text

Descriptive writing, while seemingly straightforward, presents multifaceted challenges for senior high school students. Beyond the basic mastery of generic structure and language features, as highlighted by Gerot and Wignell (1994) and Feez and Joyce (2002), lies the crucial ability to craft vivid and engaging descriptions that resonate with the reader. Students often struggle with employing varied and precise vocabulary to create sensory details and with adhering to grammatical accuracy, particularly in adjective usage and sentence construction, as Lightbown and Spada (2013) note. Moreover, affective factors, as underscored by Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1985), play a significant role; anxiety and lack of motivation can hinder students' capacity to express ideas, ultimately affecting their writing performance freely. Therefore, effective pedagogy should address both the cognitive and affective dimensions of descriptive writing, fostering a supportive environment that encourages

experimentation and risk-taking (Billa et al., 2021; Risnawaty et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the purpose of descriptive writing extends beyond mere listing of attributes. It requires students to develop a critical eye, selecting details that are not only accurate but also contribute to a specific impression or theme. Teaching descriptive writing should encourage students to consider their audience and the desired effect of their descriptions, prompting them to make deliberate choices about language and structure (Werner, 2021). The low-achieving students often do not believe that they receive respect for their ideas but that their teacher is interested only in their texts' basic organization and display of proper grammatical conventions (Potter et al., 2001). This highlights the importance of addressing the student's individual needs in the classroom (Chen, 2020).

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

In this study, the researcher applied a descriptive qualitative approach. Qualitative research aims to understand the experiences of research subjects and describe them in words and language appropriate to the context using various scientific methods (Moleong, 2007). This type of descriptive qualitative research aims to analyze students' writing performance. The research subjects were eleventh-grade students at State Senior High School 1 Parigi. To determine the subjects, the researcher selected research informants. Class A, with 10 students, was selected based on the Minimum Passing Criteria (KKM).

The subjects of this research were the eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Parigi. To get the research subject, the researcher determined the research informants. The reason the researchers chose class A with 10 students is that it is based on the (KKM).

In this research, the data are collected through a writing test based on the scoring rubric from Brown (2004) as follows:

Table 1. Writing Scoring Rubric

Aspect	Score	Performance Description
Content		
- Topic		
- Details	4	The content is complete, and the details of the sentences are related to the topic.
- Unity		
- Coherence	3	The content is complete, and the details of sentences are almost related to the topic.
	2	The content is almost complete, and the details of sentences are almost related to the topic.
	1	The topic is not complete, but the details of the sentence do not relate to the topic.
Organization		
- Identification		
- Description	4	The identification is complete, and the description is understandable
	3	The identification is complete, and the descriptions are almost understandable.
	2	The identification is almost complete, and the descriptions are almost understandable.
	1	The identification and descriptions are difficult to understand

In high school, the scoring system usually takes a 10 to 100-point scale. The researcher used the system 0-4. Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM) for English lesson in SMA Negeri 1 Parigi. The researcher converted the scoring system as in the following:

Table 2. Score Range, Category, and Qualification

Score Range	Category	Qualification
86 – 100	Very Good	Successful
70 – 85	Good	Successful
56 – 69	Fair	Successful
36 – 55	Poor	Failed
10 – 35	Very Poor	Failed

To determine the individual standard score, the researcher converted the raw scores obtained by using Arikunto (2006: 276) as follows:

$$\sum = \frac{X}{N} \times 100$$

Where:

\sum = Standard score

X = Obtained score

N = Maximum Score

Then, the researcher computed the mean score of students by using the formula by Hatch and Farhady (1982:55) as follows:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

Where:

x = Mean Score

$\sum x$ = Sum of students' score

N = Total number of students

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Findings

In this stage, the collected data were students' writing that have been composed by the students. Next, the data were analyzed and categorized by adapting Brown's scoring rubric (2004). The result of the students' descriptive writing in terms of content and organization is presented as follows:

Table 3. The Result of Students Descriptive Writing

No.	Initials	Content	Organization	Obtained Score	Maximum Score	Standard Score	Category	Qualification
1	AA	4	3	7	8	87	Very Good	Successful
2	AB	3	3	6	8	75	Good	Successful
3	AI	3	3	6	8	75	Good	Successful
4	AS	2	2	4	8	50	Poor	Failed
5	DP	3	3	6	8	75	Good	Successful
6	DZ	3	3	6	8	75	Good	Successful
7	FI	4	4	8	8	89	Very Good	Successful
8	MF	4	4	8	8	89	Very Good	Successful
9	RI	2	2	4	8	50	Poor	Failed
10	SN	3	3	6	8	75	Good	Successful
Total Score								740

Based on table 3, most of the students' writing, 60%, are at a good level, 20% are at a very good, and the others are at a poor level. At a good level, the students have difficulties in developing ideas, while at a very good level, students have difficulty lack the motivation to learn or use grammatical features properly and lack experience in grammar learning; at the poor level, students make mistakes in term grammar, lack vocabulary, developing the term of content, organizing and mechanism.

The researcher computed the mean score after calculating the total score by using the following formula:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

$$\bar{x} = \frac{740}{10}$$

$$\bar{x} = 74$$

It can be seen that the mean score of students writing was 74.

After calculating the data, in organization and content, six students are categorized as good level, two students are categorized as very good level, and two students are categorized as poor level.

Discussion

This study carefully examined the descriptive writing performance of eleventh-grade students at State Senior High School 1 Parigi, providing a comprehensive overview

of their abilities. In general, the findings indicate a promising alignment between the 2013 curriculum objectives and student achievement; they can understand the social function, structure, and features of descriptive texts and express their ideas through writing. This is a positive indication that the existing teaching approach has successfully instilled a solid foundation in descriptive writing. Students' ability to organize ideas clearly and in detail, even with strong supporting details, reflects a solid understanding of the generic structure of descriptive texts—identification and description, which is the core of this genre.

However, behind these satisfactory achievements, this study also highlights critical gaps that require in-depth attention. Although students' performance is good overall, difficulties in developing ideas and, more worryingly, a lack of motivation and experience in using grammatical features correctly are crucial areas that need to be addressed. These issues are not mere details; they are root problems that often hinder the overall quality of students' writing. Students' complaints that they 'do not know what to write' and 'cannot develop ideas,' coupled with difficulties in grammar and a lack of vocabulary, confirm that these challenges are real experiences faced by learners.

The phenomenon of limited vocabulary, in particular, is a fundamental issue that has long been highlighted in English language pedagogy. Nation (2001) explicitly states that vocabulary is 'one of the most important components of language,' and its absence can hinder not only production but also overall language comprehension. This means that if students do not have an adequate vocabulary, even brilliant ideas will struggle to be realized in coherent and effective writing. Therefore, investment in varied vocabulary teaching strategies is necessary to increase students' interest and motivation.

Furthermore, the difficulties experienced by students at the 'poor' level, such as significant grammatical errors,

limited vocabulary, and problems in organization and writing mechanics, are indicators that mastery of the basic components of writing is still uneven. This reaffirms the argument that comprehensive mastery of organization, content, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics is an absolute prerequisite for producing quality writing.

Without a strong foundation in these areas, students' efforts to express their ideas through writing will always be hampered. Therefore, although this study identified relatively good performance, the implications go far beyond statistics. Teachers are not only advised to maintain effective teaching strategies but are also encouraged to actively integrate approaches that specifically target idea development and grammar mastery.

Utilizing high-achieving students as 'role models' or 'peer work' is a smart pedagogical strategy; they can not only share ideas and improve their peers' abilities but also indirectly sharpen their writing skills. This is an essential step forward to ensure that every student, regardless of their initial level, has the opportunity to reach their full potential in writing effective and engaging descriptive texts.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the data in this study, the result of students in writing descriptive text can be concluded that:

The content of the descriptive text by eleventh-grade students is classified as very good, good, and poor. Two respondents are categorized as very good, six respondents are categorized as good, and two respondents are categorized as poor. The way students arrange paragraph text based on topic. Students construct their ideas clearly and in detail. They can create their ideas by providing supporting details to make their text easy to understand. The organization of descriptive text written by

students is categorized as very good, good, and poor. Four respondents are categorized as very good, four respondents are categorized as good, and two respondents are categorized as poor. They identify very well and also describe clearly understandable they explain their ideas in brief detail.

Suggestion

Based on the interpretation of the data and previous conclusions, the researcher proposes several suggestions for teachers, students, and other researchers. Teachers can place high-achieving students as role models or peers to help their friends who are experiencing difficulties in developing their writing skills. They can share ideas to improve their ability to compose texts. Therefore, high-achieving students should continue to pay attention to their writing characteristics to improve their skills further. For other researchers, the authors invite them to conduct similar studies to achieve improvements by selecting different aspects to obtain more diverse and in-depth results. They may also choose subjects of varying levels.

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