WRITING A RECOUNT TEXT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE EIGHTH-GRADE STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES AT MTS PIDUA

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Abstract: Writing is a challenging skill that students must master. Students must understand aspects of writing, including content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics to compose well. The objective of this study was to investigate eighth-grade students' difficulties in writing recount text at VIII MTs Pidua. A qualitative study was applied. The samples were the eighth-grade students of MTs Pidua consisting of 14 students. To collect the data, a written test in the form of an essay and a questionnaire consisting of eight questions related to grammatical, knowledge and understanding, practice, and educational background were employed. Two raters scored the students' writing products using an analytic scoring rubric. To validate the data, the triangulation method was applied. To analyze the data, Miles and Heberman's three steps were used: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. The findings revealed that the number of learners made it challenging to write a recount text. These difficulties were linked to writings aspects such as content (35.71%), vocabulary (35.71%), grammar (21.43%), and organization (21.43%). The students, on the other hand, were well-versed in mechanics. They understood the importance of punctuation, spelling, and capitalization when writing a recount text. However, the students had difficulty in writing a recount text due to limitation knowledge of grammar, less understanding of the recount text, and less practice at writing. In conclusion, the eighth-grade students at MTs Pidua still struggled with essential elements of writing that should be considered while creating a recount text.

Keywords: *students' difficulty, writing, recount text*

INTRODUCTION

People use writing as an essential skill for informal communication. Through writing, everyone can share his/her ideas and thoughts in written form. Writing is one of the language abilities that should be intentionally studied because hardly anyone understands to write naturally (Mahmudah, 2014). Additionally, writing skills are one of the important skills that students must develop for academic success (Khazrouni, 2019). In short, writing is a crucial skill to be learned by learners to gain academic success in the future.

Writing is one form of communication used by someone for the information stated in the written form to be shared with other people. Besides, writing is vital to learn for a variety of reasons, including helping students succeed academically and in future career, encouraging students to communicate, and encouraging the development from other language skills including listening, speaking, and reading (Sundari, et al., 2021). Due to that reason, in writing, the writer should convey his/her activities in a written form well-organized and understandable by the reader.

To have better writing, students should know the aspects of writing that must be considered. There are five aspects of writing known by students including content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics (McWhorter, 2016; Hacker & Sommers, 2017; Strunk & White, 2000; Lunsford & Connors, 2016). Regarding to those aspects of writing, it is expected that students can write well due to the guidance of

those aspects inside and outside of the class.

One of the texts learned by the eighth graders is to recount text. Recounts are simple narrative texts that do nothing more than recounting sequence of happenings. A recount text contains three parts: (1) an orientation that discusses the basic information of who, what, where, and when; (2) a set of happening telling the story in order; students give notes about all important activities that occur on the trip that happened. and (3) a reorientation; describes the conclusion. It states the author's personal comments on the story. Additionally, recount writing is a social genre that retells an event for the purpose of informing or entertaining (Asni et al., 2018). Furthermore, Derewianka and Jones (2013) contend that the organizational structure of recount texts includes an orientation that offers background information, a record of events that describe the sequence of steps, and a note that represents the writer's response. Within the context, it reimagines an actual context taken place earlier using previous plot lines, so the occurrences must be ordered systematic way. In short, a recount text is a short passage describing somebody's previous actions.

To effectively write a recount text, students should require six steps (Ngabut, 2003). The procedure is as follows: (1) Begin by determining what data is essential in relation to the subject matter or theme, (2) present the setting and incorporate respondents in orientation, (3) decide the events that take place relying on their plotlines, (4) analyze incidents in reorientation, (5) organize the data

for making the first summary, and (6) examine the first summary, especially in language structures, sentence features, lexical cohesion, spelling, and punctuation.

However, students still got difficulties in composing a recount text. The scholar discovered that most eighth-grade students at SMPN 3 Batujajar junior high school struggled with writing in five areas: content, grammar or language use, an organization, mechanics, and vocabulary (Utami & Apsari, 2020). Furthermore, most students in inclusion classes struggled with writing recount text in terms of content, organization, grammar, mechanics, and a generic structure (Husna & Multazim, 2019). Besides, students struggled with writing recount text due to a lack of knowledge in organizing a generic

structure entirely, transforming the tense accurately, coordinating grammar rules, selecting suitable vocabulary, and providing their thought in writing recount text (Ratnasari et al., 2015). In addition, most learners had difficulties in writing recount text in terms of content, an organization, lexicon, sentence construction, and mechanics (Khairunnisaak et al., 2022).

Moreover, understanding vocabulary is essential since writing requires the use of appropriate and varied terminology that is appropriate for the audience and purpose of the writing. The effective use of words improves the richness and precision of the text (Hacker & Sommers, 2017). If students have mastery of vocabulary, they will explore more ideas and convince the readers to the text they write. If students lack

grammar knowledge, they will struggle to make sense of their writing to other readers in order to encourage their interest in reading the paragraph they create.

Further, sentence structure limitation, a lack of knowledge and understanding, a lack of exercise, and an academic level are four reasons for writing difficulty (Huwari & Al-Khasawneh, 2013). The grammatical error occurs when students are unable to write a short paragraph, article, or passage without making numerous grammar mistakes. Throughout this situation, schools have yet to recognize sentence structure and writing tenses. Students' misunderstanding of writing requirements is referred to as knowledge and understanding. It included an understanding of the writing process, as well as writing

ideas related to the topic. Yet less exercise assumes that students participate in writing activities infrequently, they are unable to write good writing if they never practice writing in English. The teacher's educational background then refers to how he or she illustrates content in the school environment. The clarity with which the teachers teach writing can have an affect on the learners' capacity to write effectively.

Based on the previous statements, it is possible to conclude that writing is an activity where someone expresses his or her ideas, thoughts, and feelings in writing for the purpose of communicating with readers. Due to the difficulties of writing, writing, as one method of communicating, must have the goal of making the reader understand it easily. Writing can help students meet

their intellectual, physical, and emotional needs so they can be happy in life.

The novelty of this study consists in its examination of the problems in writing recount texts that MTs Pidua eighth-graders encountered, with a concentration on the areas of content, vocabulary, syntax, and structure. Although studies on students' writing abilities have been conducted, this study offers a detailed explanation of the difficulties these students encounter when writing this form of composition. The study also emphasizes the students' mastery of mechanics and compares this with their challenges in other writing-related areas, which adds to our understanding of how students develop their writing skills. Additionally, a thorough and rigorous approach to data gathering and analysis is provided using a written test, a questionnaire, an analytical scoring rubric, and the triangulation method, increasing the reliability of the study's conclusions.

Based on previous explanation, this study aimed to analyse students' difficulties in writing recount texts at MTs Pidua Meranjat Ogan Ilir, South Sumatera Province.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research was employed in this study. The natural setting is the primary source of data in qualitative research, and the researcher is the major element, interactive in looking at the thing, based on an actual object, holistic, and there was no influence from someone else (Sugiyono, 2013).

During the research, the difficulties of the eighth graders at MTs Pidua Meranjat in writing recount text were analyzed. To determine the most common problem in writing recount text, the researchers investigated the students' difficulties, recognized the issue labeled the problem, and measured frequency and percentage.

The research participants were the eighth-grade students of MTs Pidua Meranjat with 14 students in the academic year of 2021/2022. The writing test and questionnaire were used to identify students' difficulties in writing recount texts. Before writing test was given to the samples, the test had been checked the validity. In terms of validity, content validity was applied. The test was matched with a table of specification tests and the eighth English syllabus. As a

result, the test was considered valid in terms of content validity. In the writing test, students were assigned to compose a recount text. Since there were five topics provided, students selected one topic which was interesting to them. They wrote the topic of a recount text they chose, made it in 70 minutes, and had to write based on the generic structure provided. Two raters used an analytic scoring rubric to evaluate the results of students' writing. Inter-rater reliability was used to assess the test's reliability in order to reduce subjectivity in scoring.

Meanwhile, a close questionnaire was used. Respondents were instructed to choose from the options provided to respond to the inquiries. The questionnaire consisted of eight questions adapted from another researcher to determine the

students' grammatical weakness, knowledge and understanding, practice, and educational background (Za'in, 2017). Since the questionnaire was ready-made, it was considered valid and reliable.

Triangulation was used to ensure the validity of the data and to reach a conclusion accurately. The triangulation of method was implemented in this study because data was collected using two techniques, a writing test, and a questionnaire. In this study, a writing test was given to students to investigate their problems with writing a recount text, and a questionnaire was employed to learn the causal factors of their problems with writing a recount text.

To analyze the data, three steps were taken: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The writing test and questionnaire were chosen for data reduction. In the data display, students' writing was analyzed and calculated based on five aspects of writing: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. Then verify answer to the research question in the data display by comparing the writing test and questionnaire. Thus, the conclusion about the eighth-grade students of MTs Pidua's problem in writing recount text in the academic year 2021/2022 was obtained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collection used a writing test and a questionnaire. Firstly, the student's writing tests were displayed and then the results of the students' questionnaires

were displayed and discussed in each part.

The findings of students' writing were examined using a writing analytic rubric that included five aspects: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Students' difficulties in writing recount text were evaluated conforming to the rubric presented below.

Table 1
Students' Difficulties in Writing Recoun Text

Aspect of Writing	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Category
Content	1	7.14	Excellent
	5	35.71	Good
	3	21.43	Average
	5	35.71	Poor
Organization	1	7.14	Excellent
	5	35.71	Good
	5	35.71	Average
	3	21.43	Poor
Grammar	1	7.14	Excellent
	5	35.71	Good
	5	35.71	Average
	3	21.43	Poor
Vocabulary	1	7.14	Excellent
	2	14.28	Good
	5	35.71	Average
	5	35.71	Poor
Mechanics	2	14.28	Good
	12	85.71	Average

In terms of content, 1 (7.14%) student was classified as excellent, 5 (35.71%) students as good, 3 (21.43%) students as average, and 5 (35.71%) students as poor, according to Table 1. In terms of organization, 1 (7.14 %) student was rated excellent, 5 (35.71 %) students were rated good, 5 (35.71 %) students were rated average, and 3 (21.43 %) students were rated poor. In terms of grammar, 1 (7.14 %) student was rated excellent, 5 (35.71 %) students were rated good, 5 (35.71 %) students were rated average, and 3 (21.43 %) students were rated poor. In terms of vocabulary, 1 (7.14 %) student was rated excellent, 2 (14.28 %) students were rated good, 5 (35.71 %) students were rated average, and 5 (35.71 %) students were rated poor. In terms of mechanics, 2 (14.27 %) students rated

themselves as good, while 12 (85.71 %) rated themselves as average. To summarize, some students struggled with content, organization, grammar, and vocabulary. In terms of mechanics, none of the students had any difficulties.

Based on the data mentioned previously, although 5 students (35.71%) had difficulty in content aspect, 9 (64.29%) students had excellent to average ability in writing a recount text in terms of content. It indicated that some students were able to develop the topic of paragraphs with good development. Content is how the writer delivers his/her thoughts about the topic in paragraphs (Junaid, 2012). Further, it implied that the students had difficulty in content aspect because they were reluctant to read books, magazines, and others so that they did

not have any idea to write. Students found it difficult to organize their ideas when writing recount text.

The next difficulties faced by students were the organization aspect. 3 students (21.43%) had difficulty in the organization but 11 (78.57%) students had competence in the organization aspect or the paragraph structure categorized as excellent, good, and average. It means that most of the students had a good score in organizing their paragraphs. The structure and arrangement of ideas in a piece of writing is referred to as organization in writing. It entails having a clear introduction, body, and conclusion, as well as structuring ideas logically and coherently. Well-organized writing makes it easier for readers to follow the flow of ideas and improves overall readability (Hacker & Sommers, 2017). The

students did not understand how to expand their imaginations and turn ideas into good content. In fact, in order to create good content, students must create an appropriate paragraph and maintain unity with the topic. Unity requires that all sentences in a paragraph revolve around a central point or controlling idea. In most cases, the controlling idea is stated in a topic sentence. In this case, the paragraph only explained one concept.

Furthermore, 3 (21.43 %) students struggled with grammar, while 11 (78.57 %) could compose a recount text using proper grammar. The grammar skills of the 11 students ranged between excellent, good, and average. The use of the correct sentence and syntax structure for dividing, incorporating, and piecing securely in words, phrases, clauses,

and utterances is one aspect of good writing (Junaid, 2012). The students got difficulty with grammar because they were confused about the use of action verbs related to the utilization of simple past. Consequently, they had a poor ability in using action verbs. Besides, they also had problems with the use of linking verbs. Most of them could not differentiate between adjectives, adverbs, verbs, and nouns. It was found that they used the wrong linking verb and its position in the sentence. They also could not differentiate when using the subject as pronouns such as I, you, they, we, he, she, it), object as pronouns such as me, you, them, us, her, him, our, and it, and possessive adjectives. Nevertheless, students should devote attention to sentence structure and use grammatical sentences in their

recount writing. Students should understand the tenses used in the past or when writing a recount text. In fact, they used incorrect past tense forms in this case.

Next, 5 students struggled with the vocabulary, but 9 (64.29 %) excelled at writing a recount text in terms of vocabulary. Majority of students' vocabulary abilities ranged from average to good. It implied that some students can use precise and effective word choices. Vocabulary is a collection of words from which students can choose appropriate words to use in writing compositions based on their function (Yuniati, 2015).

Table 2
Questionnaire Report

No	Questions	Answer	Fre-quency	Percen-tage
1	Do you have difficulty in using grammar in writing a recount text?	Yes	9	64%
		No	5	36%
2	Do you know the use of grammar in writing a recount text?	Yes	5	36%
		No	9	64%
3	Do you understand a recount text?	Yes	6	43%
		No	8	57%
4	Do you have difficulty in understanding a recount text?	Yes	8	57%
		No	6	43%
5	Do you have enough knowledge in writing a recount text?	Yes	5	36%
		No	9	64%
6	Do you like writing a recoun text?	Yes	5	36%
		No	9	64%
7	Do you often write a recount text?	Yes	4	29%
		No	10	71%
8	Do you understand the recount text being taught?	Yes	8	57%
		No	6	43%

Based on the questionnaire report, 9 (64%) students had difficulty with grammar use, and 5 (36%) students had no problem with grammar use when writing a recount text. Most students could not utilize the simple past tense verb when retelling their experiences in the written form. Question number two revealed that 5 (36%) of students were aware of the use of grammar in writing recount texts, while 9 (64%) were unaware. It indicated that most students did not pay attention to the use of grammar when writing a recount text. Question number three revealed that 6 (43%) of students

understood the recount text, while 8 (57%) did not. It inferred that some students lacked knowledge about a recount text. They did not understand that the function of a recount text was to retell the experience in the past. They also did not master the generic structure of the text such as orientation, series of events, and reorientation. In addition, they did not know the language feature of recount text namely the use of specific participants, use of past tense, use of temporal and conjunction, personal comments, and topic. Question number 4 showed that 8 (57%) students struggled to understand the recount text, while 6 (43%) students understood it. It indicated that some students got difficulty comprehending a recount text. Question 5 showed that 5 (36%) students have sufficient knowledge in writing recount text,

while 9 (64%) students do not. It showed that most of the students had limited knowledge about a recount text. Question number 6 revealed that 5 (36%) students preferred to write a recount text, while 9 (64%) students despised it. It indicated that most of the students hated to compose a recount text. Question number 7 showed that 4 (29%) students often wrote a recount text and 10 (71%) students never wrote a recount text. It indicated that most students were lazy to describe their activities in the past. Question number 8 revealed that 8 (57%) students understood the material of recount text delivered by their teacher and 6 (43%) students did not understand it. It indicated that when the teacher explained the recount text, most students at that time understood the material.

Based on the findings above, it can be stated that the eighth graders at MTs Pidua struggled with content (35.71%), an organization (21.43%), grammar (21.43%), and vocabulary (35.71%) when writing a recount text. In this case, the students mostly struggled with the content and vocabulary aspects of writing. They also had difficulties with organization and grammar aspects. Nonetheless, those students had no trouble with the mechanics of writing a recount text. The questionnaire responses provided support for the study's findings.

The students struggled to write recount text for a variety of reasons. The questionnaire results revealed that many students struggled with grammar and could not comprehend the grammatical rules used in the recount text. It indicated that some students struggled with grammatical issues. Most students did not comprehend a recount text, had difficulty understanding it, and had limited knowledge about its terms of knowledge and understanding. In terms of practice, most students disliked writing recount texts and never practiced writing them. In terms of educational background, many of the students understood the recount text material that had been taught. In fact, they still struggled to compose a recount text since they had less writing experience, which caused them to forget the generic structure of a recount text and the use of sentence patterns when writing.

Compared with the result of students' difficulties and the reasons, it showed a relationship that some students got difficulties in content and vocabulary aspects because they never did the writing exercises inside

and outside the classroom. Since they never did the writing practice, the knowledge of a recount text they got from the teacher was forgotten that made them difficult to deliver their thoughts and utilize the right lexicons when delivering it in the written form. Besides, students had never done any exercises in writing and never read the written references that would be discussed and written. Of course, this made students' knowledge limited about something that would be written. Thus, they had difficulty expressing it using the right vocabulary and the content of their writing would be limited.

In addition, they got difficulties with grammar. It was backed by the outcome of the students' responses taken from a questionnaire that they had grammatical weaknesses in applying it to write a recount text. It

was hard for them to differentiate the changes between the simple past tense verb and the linking verbs. Some of them also had problems with the use of subject pronouns, object pronouns, and possessive pronouns. For example, they wrote "Me father and me visited your grandmother." It should be "My father and I visited our grandmother.

Some students also got difficulty in the organization of the text. The paragraphs they wrote were not coherent and the arrangement of the sentences was not based on logical order and chronologically. Although most of them comprehended the material of recount text taught by their teacher, they still got problems organizing the text. For example, they wrote the orientation of the paragraph explaining the characters, place, and time was not

coherently organized. They misplaced the series of events telling the activities done by them at the end of the paragraph. While reorientation explains students' feelings about the activities done by them were placed in the middle of the paragraph.

CONCLUSION

The eight-grade of MTs Pidua had difficulties in writing recount text in terms of content, vocabulary, grammar, and organization. They had difficulties due to limitation knowledge of grammar, lack of knowledge, and less practised at writing.

Considering the difficulties faced by the students in writing recount text, students should be exposed to writing recount text. The teacher should instruct the students to do writing activities at home so that the students are motivated to read the sources to support their writing such as books, magazines, articles, newspapers, and other available resources. By reading a lot of sources, they could gain a lot of information and express their ideas using appropriate words to make good writing. By practicing a lot, students were expected to have habits of writing that made them good writers concerning the content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics.

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