

## STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT AT THE ELEVENTH GRADE OF SMA NEGERI 1 ONOHAZUMBA

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### **Abstract**

This research aimed at investigating students' difficulties and the causes in writing descriptive text. This research used qualitative research as the research method. Data collection was carried out by using two techniques of data collections, they were: students' worksheets and the interview. The data were analyzed by using theory found by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana. The results showed that the students' difficulties in writing descriptive text are divided into two things, such as 1) the generic structure (the identification and description), 2) language features (focus on prominent and distinctive part of the object, the use of simple present, and the use of adjective). The causes of students' difficulties in writing descriptive text are the limited of vocabulary, the lack of grammar understanding, and the lack of motivation and practice. Based on the results, it can be concluded that writing descriptive text is a difficult thing for students. It is suggested that writing descriptive text should be learned and taught intensively.

**Key words:** *difficulties; writing; descriptive text*

### **Abstrak**

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki kesulitan siswa dan penyebab dalam menulis teks deskriptif. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian kualitatif sebagai metode penelitian. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan menggunakan dua teknik pengumpulan data, yaitu: lembar kerja siswa dan wawancara. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan teori yang ditemukan oleh Miles, Huberman, dan Saldana. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kesulitan siswa dalam menulis teks deskriptif terbagi menjadi dua hal, seperti 1) struktur generik (identifikasi dan deskripsi), 2) fitur bahasa (fokus pada bagian yang menonjol dan khas dari objek, penggunaan simple present, dan penggunaan kata sifat). Penyebab kesulitan siswa dalam menulis teks deskripsi adalah keterbatasan kosa kata, kurangnya pemahaman tata bahasa, dan kurangnya motivasi dan latihan. Berdasarkan hasil tersebut, dapat disimpulkan bahwa menulis teks deskripsi merupakan hal yang sulit bagi siswa. Disarankan bahwa menulis teks deskriptif harus dipelajari dan diajarkan secara intensif.*

**Kata Kunci :** *Kesulitan; Menulis; Teks Deskriptif*

### **A. Introduction**

Language as a tool of communication that cannot be separated from human life. Language is used to deliver ideas, thoughts,

feelings, and opinion to the world. English is the international language which is used by most people. However it is as the primary tool for people in doing some

business such as economics, technology, industries, even education. Sapir(1921:7) state "Language is a purely human and non instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desire by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols".

Generally, there are four skills in learning English they are Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Listening means understanding the spoken or oral language, speaking means the act of uttering the language through the oral sound, reading is the act understanding the language from the text, and writing is the way to express the idea or thought (language) in written form. In teaching and learning process, all of those language skills have to be mastered well in order to help the students get the good communication. In this study, researcher will focus on the writing field to analyze about students difficulties in writing descriptive text.

Writing is also a process of discovering and organizing your ideas, putting them on a paper, reshaping and revising them. Writing is producing a sequence of sentences arranged in particular order and linked together in certain ways. A sequence of sentences whether it is short or long after being put in order and linked together, they will form a coherent whole. This coherent whole is called as text. A text may consist of one paragraph or more. Writing is a skill which can help the writer to deliver information from mind into a piece of paper and as process of utilizing symbols to deliver thoughts and ideas into a readable form. In writing, it needs to understand about the

rule of grammar and the component of good writing but also should notice about the pronouns and the punctuation marks.

At school, writing is one of the materials that must be learned by all students. Each student is expected to produce a brief and well-organized about describing descriptive text. For this reason, all students in the writing classrooms usually are asked to write simple texts, such as narrative, recount, descriptive, procedure, discussion, review, spoof and expository. In the new curriculum, K-2013, the students are expected to write a precise and cortposed texts in every writing task. Writing plays an important role for students who are in the process of learning a language. In Indonesian school, students are required to learn to write different text types. There are some types of text that should be learned by eleventh grade, they are: Recount, Narrative, Procedural, News Item and Descriptive. But the researcher focus on descriptive text.

Descriptive text is a text used to give a detailed information or description about a particular object. It describes particular object like things, animals, persons or places. Describing object means explaining whole part and create real impression of the object. According to Kane (2000: 352) description is about sensory experience how something looks, sounds, tastes. Mostly it is about visual experience, but description also deals with other kinds of perception. We are creating a descriptive text, there is generic structure which make our writing is true. Generic structure has two aspects, those are identification and

description.

Descriptive text consists of two generic structure that is identification and description. According to Zakaria et al (2021:11) descriptive text has generic structure as follows: 1. Identification is a part of paragraph of description text which tells a topic and characters that would be described. 2 Description is a part of paragraph of description text which tells the content of describing the particular person, place or thing. Beside generic structure, descriptive text also has its own language features. Language feature of descriptive text are: use specific participant, written in present tense, use linking verbs, use adjectives, use relational and material processes. Therefore, the most important thing to create a descriptive text is on how we transfer our ideas in our mind into a piece of paper, our ability to selected appropriate words to develop sentences by sentences become a good paragraph is needed to avoid misunderstanding for reader. The purpose of the descriptive text is clear, that is to describe, represent or reveal a particular person or an object in detail or specific to make the reader be able to visualize the description, either abstract or concrete.

Based on the explanation above, the students have difficulties in writing certain types of text, especially descriptive text. In this type of writing, the students are expected to have a good vocabulary mastery in order to able to describe someone or something clearly. But in fact, the ability of students in writing, especially descriptive text is still lack of knowledge.

Some students are not able to make short texts in the form of descriptive. The students had difficulty in describing something relevant with topic. The students also had difficulty choosing the appropriate words due to lack of vocabulary mastery. Furthermore, the students tend to be bored and low participation in writing class.

## **B. Research Method**

Descriptive approach is practiced in many disciplines, so a range of data collection methods has been devised to cater for the varied requirements of the different subjects, such as: qualitative interviewing, focus groups, participant, discourse and conversation analysis and analysis of texts and documents (Walliman 2011:131). In addition, "qualitative research is a research that involves analyzing and interpreting texts and interview in order to discover meaningful patterns descriptive of particular phenomenon" (Aurebach & Silvester, 2003:1). Then, qualitative research has a natural setting as a direct source of the data. Qualitative research is focus in process rather than simply with outcomes and products.

It can be conclude that the theoretical explanation above, the researcher was conduct the study based on the qualitative approach especially case study procedures.

Data collection techniques is a way that can be used by researchers to collect data and obtain objective data. In this research, researcher used several methods in data collection as follows:

### **1. Documentation**

The documentation that researcher

means is the result of students worksheets in writing descriptive text. Students' writing is conducted for checking the students' difficulties about descriptive text.

## 2. Interview

Interview is a process to get information by delivered several questions from the interviewer to the interviewee.

The researcher did the data analisis by using Miles, Huberman & Saldaña's theory. According to Miles, Huberman & Saldaña (2014:31-33), there are 3 activities in analyzing qualitative data:

### 1. Data condensation

Data condensation refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying abstracting, and/or transforming the data that appear in the full corpus (body) of written-up field notes, interview transcripts, documents and other empirical material.

In this step the researcher collected the data from the students of eleventh grade of SMK Negeri 1 Onohazumba. In selecting the data, the researcher found the students' difficulties in writing descriptive text. Focusing refers to the consistency of the process of analysis carry out on the data. Then, the researcher made the data simpler or easier to do and understandable by arranged the students' difficulties in writing descriptive text of SMK Negeri 1 Onohazumba in a table. Finally, the researcher converts the data in a good form or structure. The purpose of this stage is to help the researcher in

organizing and arranged the data in the next steps.

### 2. Data display

Generally, a display is an organized compressed assembly of information that allows conclusion drawing and action. Looking at data display help us to understand what is happening and to do something—either analyze further or take action based on that understanding. Display of data in the conduction of this research is carried out through presenting the whole students' difficulties and factors that influential in descriptive text of SMK Negeri 1 Onohazumba.

### 3. Drawing and verifying conclusion

The third stream of analysis activity is conclusion drawing and verification. From the start of data collection, the qualitative analysis nterprets what things means by noting patterns, explanations, casual flows, and propositions. Conclusions are also verified as the analyst proceeds.

## C. Research Finding and Discussion

### 1. Students difficulties' in writing descriptive text at the eleventh grade of SMK Negeri 1 Onohazumba

The following result of students'worksheet writing descriptive text at the eleventh grade of SMK Negeri 1 Onohazumba.Here, lots of students difficult to write the descriptive text that focus on the generic language and language feature.

#### a. In writing Generic Structure of descriptive text

According to Agung et al (2019:199), the generic structure of descriptive text are: the descriptive text consist of the identification which appear at the beginning of the paragraph to introduce the object. On the other hand, the description part describes the character or qualities of the object. In writing the generic structures of descriptive text, most of students at eleventh grade of SMK N 1 Onohazumba have some difficulties. The difficulties as follow :

- 1) The identification becomes the first part of introducing briefly the object to describe. This part usually mentions the name and essential explanations about the object. It starts with an introductory paragraph of the text then continues with several explanations paragraphs. The second generic structure of the text is description.

Example : (Student 1 worksheet)

*"Tradition in the village of bawamataluo  
Moreover, Bawamataluo village has many cultural traditions, such as megalithic relies, traditional houses, and the stone jumping tradition, tradition in fact, there are many others interesting cultures."*

It can be seen from the descriptive text above, they had difficulties in generic structure. The generic structure consisted of two paragraphs, it was identification and description. But, in the student worksheet above, they just made one paragraph, and immediately

described about the place without identifying the place.

- 2) The description part tells about each section or feature of the object described. It begins with the explanation of the general physician to the unique specification quality and the habit of the human, animal or thing explained.

Example : (Student 2 worksheet)

*"Bawomataluo village, or well-known as the hill of the sun is located in Fanayama District, South Nias, North Sumatra. Bawomataluo is one of the most famous village in Nias, especially South Nias. Every year, there is a cultural event in this village and routenely held, it is usually called Bawomataluo Cultural Festival."*

The difficulty can be seen in this worksheet which is only consists of one paragraph and it is too short. In writing descriptive text, it should be at least consists of two or more paragraph. The first one should be introductory paragraph, and the second one or another paragraph should be description of the object being described. But, in the worksheet above they did not describe the characteristics, and the specification of the object explained, they were wrote about where it located without follows by the description of the place.

- b. In writing language features of descriptive text

Descriptive text has its own language features. Language feature of descriptive text are: focus on what prominent or



distinctive part (use specific participant), written in present tense, use linking verbs, use action verbs, and use adjectives. In writing this language features, most of students eleventh grade of SMK N 1 Onohazumba have some difficulties. The difficulties as follows :

- 1) Focuses on the prominent or distinctive part (specific participant) of the object that the writer wants to describe.

There are some students do not write the text based on the language feature. In this step students not focus on the object that should be describe, such as Bawomataluo village.

Example : (Student 3 assignment)

- a) Nias Heritage
- b) Lagundri Beach
- c) Turelotu Beach
- d) Humugu Waterfall

*A unique house in the village of bawamataluo*

*In this village there is a house of the king (head of the tribe) which has a unique and magnificent architecture even though it is traditional. The building is in the form of a stilt house with a rectangular plan with a u letter pattern measuring 22x12 meters and approximately 30 meters high may 30,2020.*

It can be seen from the student worksheet above, they did not focus on what should they described or they not focus on the object that was described, which is Bawomataluo village. It should be focus on Bawomataluo village rather than create a new point. In writing descriptive text we should focus on one

object because the object that described is not common, only one (specific participant).

- 2) Descriptive text uses the present tense. Because the descriptive text focuses on describing a real object, it requires to use the simple present tense.

Example : (Student 4 worksheet)

*Located on a hill with an attitude of 324 meters above Sea Level, also known as Sunrise it is estimated that this village has existed that this village has existed since the 18th centory and is still maintained today. every year, a cultural event is routinely held called the Bawomataluo Cultural Festival.*

*One of the Uniaveness of the nias traditional house is its construction, which was built without any nails at all to make it environmentally friendly Before building a house, a traditional ceremony will be carried out First so that the building can bring blessing to the home owner and protect him from band things.*

*Entering the village area, visitors can see a nias traditional house called Omo Hada, a traditional house on stilts for the nias people, And there is also another Nias traditional house, namely 'Omo Sebua, a traditional house which is the residence of the heads of state or tu henon village heads or salawa, and the nobility.*

From the text above, the difficulty is the use of simple present tense. The first sentence should be start by using simple present tense. In the student worksheet above, they start their sentence with 'Located on a hill with an attitude of 324 meters above Sea Level', it should be

*'Bawomataluo village is Located on a hill with an attitude of 324 meters above Sea Level'. And in last paragraph in the first sentence should be 'When entering the village area' instead of 'Entering the village area'.*

- 3) Linking verbs in the descriptive text are used to describe the appearance of an object or function of the parts contained in the object represented, for example: am, is, have, etc. Based on the collected data, researcher found that most of eleventh grade students of SMK N 1 Onohazumba were able to write the linking verbs in descriptive text. They could mention where to put and how in their descriptive text which is indicated that they did not have any difficulties in this part.
- 4) The use of action verbs are also one of the language features in the description text. Each text that is studied academically has the language features criteria used, as well as descriptive text. Based on the collected data, researcher found that most of eleventh grade students of SMK N 1 Onohazumba were able to write this action verbs in descriptive text. They write the instruction to complete the task in their descriptive text. It is indicated that they did not have any difficulties in this part.
- 5) The use of adjectives. Adjectives used in descriptive text to provide more detail information for object that are being described.

Example (Student 5 worksheet)

*Bawomataluo village is a settlement in the*

*Teluk Dalam province of the South Nias Regency of Indonesia. The village is built on a flat-topped hill, the name Bawomataluo meaning "Sun Hill", and is one of the best-preserved villages built in traditional style. The biggest house is that of the chief and is believed to date back to the eighteenth century. The big stone slabs stand in front of the houses and an open space in the centre of the village is used for ceremonies traditional and rituals.*

*Bawōmataluo Village is Famous as a village cultural and the culture famous of this village is the "stone jump" hombo batu tradition, which is a tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation in nias. Previously, this activity was a training for Nias Youths to fight against enemies.*

From the text above, it can be seen that the difficulty here is the use of adjective. the use of the adjectives (an adjective) to clarify noun. In second paragraph there are some errors in using adjective, '*ceremonies traditional*' it should be '*traditional ceremonies*', '*village cultural*' should be '*cultural village*', and '*the culture famous*', should be '*the famous culture*'.

Based on the fact above, it can be concluded that most of students at eleventh grade of SMK N 1 Onohazumba have difficulties in writing descriptive text. They difficulties are lie on two things. The first difficulty is in writing language features of descriptive text and the second difficulty is in writing generic structure of descriptive text.

The concept of the difficulty level of

text is about vocabulary, sentence length and structure of the sentence that must be read by the students. So, the teachers must ensure if the texts that are used for the students match with students' ability in writing descriptive text.

## 2. The factors that cause students' difficulties in writing descriptive text at the eleventh grade of SMK Negeri 1 Onohazumba

Based on the data analysis from students worksheets, most of the students at eleventh grade of SMK N 1 Onohazumba have difficulties in writing descriptive text. And after knowing that they have difficulties in writing descriptive text, the researcher did the interview to get more information and also to seek what the factor that cause the students difficulty in writing, especially descriptive text. Based on the result of the interview, there are some factors that cause the students difficulties in writing descriptive text. The researcher get some result, these factors that are:

### 1. Limited vocabulary

Vocabulary is one the most important thing in the process of learning English, and it also has effect in writing 2. descriptive text. Based on the result of interview, the researcher found that a lot of students have difficulty difficulties in writing descriptive text are caused by the lack of vocabulary or they have limited vocabularies. The result of their interview showed that they could not write the language features and generic structure of descriptive text because they did not know the words that used and

also had difficulty in choosing the appropriate words due to lack of vocabulary mastery or the limitation of vocabulary they know.

As student 1 stated :

*"Saya selalu sulit dan bingung dibagian ini, pak. Saya tidak tahu banyak kosa kata dan tata bahasa. Itu yang membuat saya merasa sulit dan bingung dalam menulisnya, saya mencoba menulis identifikasi nya, tapi tidak tau bagaimana menyusunnya dalam kalimat bahasa Inggris yang benar."*

Student 2 also stated :

*"Karena saya kurang menguasai kosa kata, pak. Saya tidak tau banyak kosa kata. Itu membuat saya merasa sulit dan bingung dalam menulis identifikasi dan deskripsi dalam teks deskriptif."*

It can be seen from this statements above that vocabulary plays the important rule in their mastery of writing descriptive text. Because they had limitation English words and they difficult to selected or choosing the appropriate words to developed their sentence by sentence become a good paragraph, then they had difficulty in writing descriptive text.

The lack of grammar understanding

Grammar is also has a role in writing, especially descriptive text. In writing descriptive text there are grammatical features (simple present tense, action verb, adjective). Most of students claimed that grammar is one of the difficulty in writing descriptive text. They claim they had a little bit understanding about grammar but it is



not enough to do writing descriptive text well.

As student 3 stated :

*"Saya pikir karna kurangnya saya dalam penguasaan grammar. Karena saya sering bingung ketika menulis dalam bahasa Inggris. Saya sering bertanya-tanya apakah saya menulis language featuresnya dengan benar atau tidak."*

Based on the statement above, researcher concluded that the lack of grammar understanding also causes the students difficulties in writing descriptive text because they did not know how to construct a good sentence.

### 3. The lack of motivation and practice

Motivation is one of the most important factors in learning process. Without motivation, the purposes of learning is tough to be achieved. Based on the data obtained and the result of the interview, it shows that motivation plays important role in the process of students learning. The result of their interview shows that most of eleventh grade students of SMK N 1 Onohazumba have difficulties in writing descriptive text are also cause by their motivation. Students do not have motivation to write. They feel lazy because they think that writing, especially writing in English is a difficult activity. They tend to be bored and low participation in writing class. They did not pay attention in the process of teaching and rarely practice their skill in writing English so they did not understand and did not know the language features and generic structures

of descriptive text. The lack of their motivation and practice also made them could not follow the process of teaching learning and when they had lack of motivation and practice, the things comes difficulty to them to learn and understand.

As student 4 stated :

*"Sebenarnya saya tidak memiliki motivasi yang cukup untuk menulis bahasa Inggris, pak. Saya malas dan tidak tertarik pelajaran bahasa Inggris karena sulit dimengerti. Itu sebabnya saya juga tidak termotivasi."*

From these statements above, it can be concluded that the students were lack of motivation and lack of practice in learn English. They really did not pay attention in the learning process, so that it is causes their difficulties in writing descriptive text.

### 4. The lack of teacher feedback

Teacher feedback involves providing information on whether your student has understood their learning and the next steps. Effective teacher feedback examples assist your child to reflect on their learning, including their learning method, so they know whether to adjust their method for further progress. The teacher feedback is also has the role in learning process. The lack of teacher feedback made students at eleventh grade of SMK negeri 1 Onohazumba difficult to write in English.

As student 5 stated :

*"Ya, mungkin itu hanya sedikit feedback. Karena saya sering tidak mengerti apa yang dijelaskan dalam pelajaran bahasa Inggris."*

*Kadang saya merasa guru tidak menjelaskan materi secara detail dan itu membuatku malas. Jadi, saya harap kelas lebih menyenangkan dan lebih fokus."*

From the student' statement above, it can be concluded that the lack of teacher feedback will effect students in learning process. The teacher is not considered not to have method that suits them, so the students have difficulty in writing.

Based on the facts and statements above, it can be concluded that most of students at eleventh grade of SMK N 1 Onohazumba have difficulties in writing descriptive text are caused by some factors. These factors are lies on three things. The first is limited vocabulary, second is the lack of grammar understanding, and the third one is the lack of motivation and practice . These factors made students could not write the language features and generic structure of descriptive text.

#### D. Conclusion

Students get difficulties in writing descriptive text. Students still got the difficulties to understand how to construct a good descriptive. The difficulties lie on how to identify the object that is described. Most of students put the identification in the description part and there is a description without identification. Next, the description given without follows in the described object. Moreover, using simple present and adjectives is also difficulties in writing the text.

Furthermore, the difficulties are

caused by limited of vocabulary mastery, and the lack of grammar understanding. Then, the lack of motivation and practice in learning are also being the factor of the difficulties. The last, the lack of teacher feedback in learning process.

#### E. Suggestion

After concluding the research, the researcher proposed three suggestions for English Learner, English teachers, and next researchers which are presented below.

##### 1. To English learners

The English learners are suggested to be able to support each other. In other words, the students will make collaboration with their classmates to

##### 2. make groups in solving the problem and looking for solution of the difficulties that they faced.

##### 3. English Teachers

For English teachers, the results of the research can be used to obtain information and references regarding of students' difficulties in writing descriptive text. Then, the English teacher should have the other skill to control the student in the class when students didn't like to study.

##### 4. Next researchers

The objective of this research were the students difficulties in writing descriptive text and what are that factors that occurred. For the next researcher, it is recommended to other researchers to conduct similar studies to enhance the knowledge about this matter and expected to use this

research finding as reference or guidance to conduct the broader research related to the problem stated previously.

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