

Genre Quality Analysis of Junior High School Students' Recount Texts across Different Writing Ability Levels

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Abstract

This study analyzed the quality of students' recount texts in terms of social function, generic structure (orientation, events, reorientation), and lexicogrammatical features (material process, specific participants, temporal sequence, past tense, and circumstances of time and place) across different levels of writing ability. It implemented a qualitative descriptive study. The data were derived from a writing recount test from 30 eighth-grade students at a junior high school in Semarang. The findings demonstrated that writing ability affected the quality of students' recount texts. All students, regardless of ability, achieved the social function of recounting text to retell past events. They were generally able to develop orientation, specific participants, material process, and circumstances of time and places well, especially among low-level students, even though higher-level students still showed greater ability. Moreover, the quality of some aspects also improved across different writing ability levels, including events, reorientation, past tense, and temporal sequence. However, tense shifts and inconsistent use of temporal sequence still occurred even among high-level students. For the implication, the teacher need to focus creating events in a well-developed, reflective reorientation, as well as lexicogrammatical features that are remained challenges, such as past tense and temporal sequence.

Keywords: generic structure; lexicogrammatical features; recount text; social function; writing ability

INTRODUCTION

One crucial genre of text at the secondary level is the recount text. This text is first introduced to the eighth-grade students. This text serves as a foundational genre for students to practice writing. It encourages students to organize ideas logically and to express experiences coherently in writing, which are essential skills for developing more complex genres in higher grades. This text can help students develop their stories related to historical events (Gayatri & Gaffar, 2023) or personal experiences. By writing a recount text, students can develop their understanding of text organization and the

use of lexicogrammatical features. Therefore, the mastery of writing recount texts reflects the students' writing competence.

A text that retells past experiences in sequence and describes what has already happened is called a recount text (Anderson & Anderson, 2003). In genre-based theory, a recount text has a specific social function, a generic structure, and lexicogrammatical features. First, social function of a recount text is to inform or entertain. Second, there are three generic structures in recount text: orientation, events, and reorientation. Orientation refers to the participants, place,

and time of the story. Events are activities that occur coherently. Reorientation refers to the conclusion or ending of a story. Lastly, this text has lexicogrammatical features, including the explanation of the specific participant, the use of material process, the use of past tense, the use of circumstantial time and place, and the use of temporal sequence (Gerot & Wignell, 1994). Hence, understanding the genre features is crucial to developing effective recount texts.

Several problems arose during the use of genre features in students' recount texts. First, the students have difficulty in implementing the generic structure of recount texts (events, orientation, and reorientation) appropriately. They understand the concept of generic structure but fail to apply it in their texts. Nasri and Yoni (2025) found that many students had difficulty organizing events in a clear, chronological order and that the reorientation section was either ignored or inadequately developed. Second, the students have difficulty in implementing appropriate lexicogrammatical features, including circumstances of time and place, past tense, temporal sequence, specific participants, and material process. Hendrita and Geni (2018) found that recount texts contained lexicogrammatical problems, including the implementation of past-tense verbs, past-action verbs, nouns and pronouns, adverbs, adjectives, and conjunctions.

In addition, preliminary research from classroom observations and interviews with an English educator and several students strengthened this study. Based on the classroom observation, the researcher had become a pre-service teacher who taught English to the target students. The result revealed that the students did not use the generic structure of recount texts appropriately and struggled to employ several lexicogrammatical features. Next,

from the interview with an English teacher, he rarely encouraged the learners to write a whole text. Teaching English primarily focused on grammar, leaving students without the opportunity to practice expressing their ideas in writing. Lastly, based on interviews with several students, they had difficulty producing a text, especially in expressing and organizing ideas and in using the past tense appropriately. It emphasizes the struggle with the generic structure and the lexicogrammatical features of the recount text.

Several studies analyzed generic structure, errors, and writing ability separately. Most previous studies focused only on analyzing the generic structure of recount texts. Aprilina et al. (2022) found that students performed well in writing recount texts, even though some parts of the generic structure were incomplete. Some studies also analyzed the language features used in each generic structure in the recount text. Iriana (2018) found that several students could write the recount text appropriately. However, there were still some errors in grammatical range and accuracy. Lastly, most studies also analyzed students' writing ability. Pratiwi et al. (2023) found that learners' writing ability in recount texts is low.

Furthermore, several studies highlighted the genre analysis of students' recount texts. Nurohmah (2013) investigated the text's schematic structure and linguistic features. It revealed that most students could apply an appropriate schematic structure, but most had difficulty with prepositional phrases, regular and irregular verbs, the simple present tense, the and past tenses. In more complex analysis, Hidayat and Herniawati (2023) and Sianipar et al. (2020) analyzed generic structure, linguistic features, and social function. Sianipar et al. (2020) focused on analyzing the recount texts in English

textbooks. It revealed that the recounts were similar in linguistic elements and process type but differed in social goals and generic structure. Hidayat and Herniawati (2023) revealed that students used the generic structure appropriately and employed linguistic features, including circumstances of time and place, the past tense, specific participants, and material processes.

Evaluating students' writing is not only based on writing aspects, including content, grammar, vocabulary, organization, and mechanics. It should go beyond writing aspects to analyze how students produce a text as a meaningful genre. A study by Ortega (2023) showed that students have positive perspectives on the application of Genre-Based Pedagogy (GBP) and that it is effective in facilitating the composition process in genre comprehension as well as ease in the writing process. Based on the genre analysis, the students need to produce a recount text with an appropriate social function, express their ideas smoothly through the generic structure, and implement appropriate linguistic and lexicogrammatical features. However, writing assessments often evaluate aspects of writing without examining the implementation of genre features in recount texts. There is limited attention to the generic structure, social function, and lexicogrammatical features of recount texts written by secondary-level students. Therefore, it is crucial to analyze the genre features of students' recount texts across different writing ability levels (low, medium, and high) in depth.

Based on these previous studies, the studies focused only on students' ability, generic structure, and lexicogrammatical features separately. Most studies also only analyzed generic structure or lexicogrammatical features of the students' recount texts at the general level. They only listed the occurrence

and examples of lexicogrammatical features and generic structure without analyzing in depth the quality of each aspect. Moreover, most studies also conducted genre analysis focusing on the social function, generic structure, and lexicogrammatical features of recount texts at a general level. Although previous studies have made several contributions, gaps remain. Most studies evaluated the recount texts in general writing ability levels. In this study, the researcher analyzed in depth the social function, generic structure, linguistic features, and lexicogrammatical features across different writing ability levels: low, medium, and high ability. According to the identified gaps, the purpose of this research is to evaluate the quality of students' recount texts based on social function, generic structure (orientation, events, reorientation), and lexicogrammatical features (temporal sequence, past tense, specific participants, material process, and circumstances of time and place) across students' writing ability levels (low, medium, and high).

METHODOLOGY

This study implemented a qualitative approach with document analysis design. Qualitative research is a technique for exploring individual or group meanings of social or human problems (Creswell, 2009). Document analysis is a systematic procedure for evaluating documents (Bowen, G., 2009). The aim of the research design is to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This research design is suitable for this study because it analyzed the quality of genre features in recount texts based on lexicogrammatical features, social function, and generic structure.

The researcher used cluster random sampling in this study. A cluster sample is a random sample of natural groupings (clusters) of

individuals within a population, such as a village, school, or urban area. It is beneficial because the population is widely distributed, and the researcher cannot obtain a representative sample of the entire population (Nongkynrih, 2012). The researcher selected one of the classes (8B) to become the sample. There were 30 eighth-grade students one of junior high school in Semarang.

The data of this study were gained from the students' recount texts. Several steps were implemented. The researcher distributed the paper test to the learners. The students were instructed to produce recount texts about their unforgettable moment of 100-150 words in 80 minutes. They needed to consider the social function, generic structure, and lexicogrammatical features of recount text. After gaining the data, the researcher analyzed five writing components proposed by Brown (2004) consisting of content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics to gain the score. The scores reflected their writing ability in three levels: low, medium, and high. The grading score is shown in the following table.

Table 1. Grading Score	
Ability Level	Score
High	91-100
	81-90
Medium	71-80
	61-70
	51-60
Low	41-50
	0-40

The result indicated that there were six low-level texts, 9 medium-level texts, and 15 high-level texts. In this study, the researcher analyzed deeper the quality of recount text based on the different writing ability levels from low, medium, and high.

In analyzing the data, the researcher used qualitative content analysis proposed by

(Krippendorff, 2004). A research technique to understand the meaning and context of the text is called content analysis. There are several steps in analyzing the data, including unitizing, sampling, recording, reducing, inferring, and narrating. First, unitizing means determining the units of analysis, which were clauses and sentences. Second, sampling means selecting the students' recount texts as the main data source. Third, recording means classifying the data into several categories. The categories are social function, generic structure: orientation, events, reorientation, and lexicogrammatical features: temporal sequence, circumstances of time and place, past tense, specific participant, material process. Fourth, reducing means selecting the important data and omitting the inappropriate data. Fifth, inferring means interpreting the data to identify the patterns and relationships among categories. Finally, narrating means describing the results using tables and examples from the students' recount texts. In the process of analyzing the data, the researcher used ethical clearance to not show the students' name and changed them into code, such as L1 for low-level text 1.

In this study, the researcher analyzed the quality of the generic structure (orientation, events, and reorientation), social function, and lexicogrammatical features (past tense, temporal sequence, specific participant, material process, and circumstances of time and place) in detail. The researcher explained the descriptions at every aspect and level, then compared the patterns and differences across low, medium, and high levels.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the result and discussion of the quality of social function, generic structure (orientation, events, and reorientation), and lexicogrammatical features (past tense, material process, specific participants, temporal

sequence, and circumstances of time and place). This finding is similar to several previous studies. The quality was assigned into four levels: excellent, good, fair, and poor. Then, the researcher compared the quality of each student's recount text. Senjawati (2016) found that all students were aware of the social purpose of recount texts, (low, medium, and high).

The Quality of Social Function of Students' Recount Texts across Different Writing Ability Levels

Social function is crucial in genre-based writing because it reflects whether the text achieves the communicative purpose. Gerot and Wignell (1994) stated that retelling past experiences to inform or entertain is the social function of recount text. In this research, the texts were examined using two classifications: achieved and not achieved. The comparison of social function across different writing ability levels is shown in the table below.

Table 2. The Quality of Social Function of Recount Text across Different Writing Ability Levels

Level	n	Social Function		%
		Achieved	Not Achieved	
Low	6	6	-	100%
Med	9	9	-	100%
High	15	15	-	100%

Based on the table, all six low-level students, nine medium-level students, and 15 high-level students successfully achieved the social function of recount text at 100%. No student did not achieve the social function of recount text. It indicated that all students, regardless of writing level, were capable of achieving the communicative purpose of recount texts to retell past events or experiences. These findings align with the theory proposed by Gerot and Wignell (1994) that retelling past experiences to inform or entertain is the social function of recount text.

and Anggini and Kurniawan (2020) showed that the students already understood the social function of recount texts. Other previous studies demonstrated findings similar to this study. Apriskilia (2021) and Amalia (2025) showed that the students successfully achieved the communicative purpose of recount text.

Social function is one of the accessible aspects of genre writing for the students. The reason is that the social function is tied to the text's content and purpose. The students can still achieve the social function even though they have difficulty with other aspects, including grammar and organization. Senjawati (2016) found that the students could achieve the social function of recount text, but there were some grammatical problems, such as past tense, articles, and plurals. Hence, achieving social function does not mean that the students have also mastered the other aspects in recount text. Overall, the students can achieve the communicative purpose of recount text.

The Quality of Generic Structure of Students' Recount Texts across Different Writing Ability Levels

The generic structure of a recount text consists of three main structures: orientation, events, and reorientation, as proposed by Gerot and Wignell (1994). The results of analyzing the generic structure across different writing ability levels are presented below.

Table 3. The Quality of Generic Structure of Recount Text in terms of Orientation, Events, and Reorientation across Different Writing Ability Levels

Generic Structure					
Struc	Lev	Poor	Fair	Good	Excell.
Orientation	Low	-	2 (33%)	4 (67%)	-
	Med	-	-	9 (89%)	1 (11%)
	High	-	-	5 (33%)	10 (67%)
Event	Low	2 (33%)	3 (50%)	1 (17%)	-
	Med	-	1 (11%)	3 (50%)	-
	High	-	-	10 (67%)	5 (33%)
Reorientation	Low	2 (33%)	4 (67%)	-	-
	Med	-	4 (44%)	3 (33%)	2 (22%)
	High	-	1 (6.7%)	6 (40%)	8 (53.3%)

and several texts were missing one part of the background information.

For medium-level students, nine students (89%) were categorized in the good category, and only one student (11%) in the excellent category. Compared to low-level students, medium-level students demonstrated stronger ability to develop complete background information and a clearer orientation section. Most students developed complete background information, though with limited elaboration and creativity. Moreover, one student achieved the excellent category with complete background information, clear elaboration, and creativity that engaged the readers' interest.

For high-level students, five students (33%) were categorized as good and ten students (67%) as excellent. Most of the students had an advanced ability to develop more engaging introductory paragraphs with complete background information, detailed descriptions, and engaging expressions to attract the readers' interest. However, several students were still developing this section with limited elaboration and creativity. Hence, the results indicated that all writing ability levels were able to create orientation in the recount text, even at low-levels. However, the quality improved across different levels with a more complete and well-organized introduction.

This finding is similar to Sulistianti et al. (2024). The study showed that 46% of students were categorized as excellent and 30% as good. It indicated that the student could develop the story's context and background. Orientation is one of the accessible structures for students across different writing ability levels because this part contains background information: participants, time, and place, which are understood even by low-level students.

1. Orientation

Orientation is the introductory paragraph in the recount text that presents background information of the story, including participants, time, and place. In this section, the researcher analyzes the completeness of the background information and the students' elaborately and creatively organized the orientation.

Based on the rubric, the quality of the students' recount texts varied across the fair, good, and excellent categories. The categories of excellent, good, fair, and poor were determined based on the descriptors provided in the rubric for each structure and features. Therefore, the meaning of each category varied according to the feature being assessed. For low-level students, two students (33%) were categorized in the fair category and four students (67%) in the good category. Even though the students were classified as low- ability, they were able to develop an orientation containing background information. However, all of the texts had limited elaboration and creativity,

In contrast, Amalina and Yulianto (2024) showed that the students faced difficulties with the generic structure of the recount text, including 24% inadequate orientation and unclear chronological order. Amelia et al. (2024) also stated that most students could produce complete orientation, but they had difficulty in the development and organization of orientation. The finding from this study align with previous studies that students can produce orientation, but the quality of elaboration and creativity differs between lower and higher levels.

2. Events

Events are the main section that presents activities or experiences coherently in recount texts. In this section, the researcher analyzed how students develop the text coherently using connector words, elaborately using detailed descriptions, and creatively using emotional engagement to engage the readers' interest.

Based on the data, the quality of events varied from poor, fair, good, and excellent. For low-level students, two students (33%) were categorized as poor, three students (50%) as fair, and one student (17%) as good. The students had difficulties developing the events section. Half of the students could develop the activities using connective words, but the texts had weak coherence, elaboration, and grammatical errors. Only one student developed the events in sequence using connector words although they were basic and less elaborate. Contrastingly, some students did not develop the events.

For medium-level students, one student (11%) was categorized as fair, three students (50%) as good, and five students (56%) as excellent. The students demonstrated a stronger ability than low-level students to

develop the events coherently. Most students were capable of developing the events coherently, implementing connective words, engaging emotionally, and providing deeper descriptions. However, a few texts were less elaborate and had less emotional engagement. Conversely, one student developed events with weak coherence, grammatical errors, less elaboration, and less emotional engagement.

For high-level students, ten students (67%) were categorized as good and five students (33%) as excellent. The students performed best in producing events. Most students could develop the events coherently with appropriate connector words, but with limited elaboration and engagement. The rest of the students enriched the events with clear, detailed descriptions, and emotional engagements. Thus, the results indicated that the quality of the events improved across different writing levels. Low-level students had difficulty in developing the events in sequence while medium and high-level students developed events more coherently, implemented connector words, and provided detailed elaboration and emotional engagement.

The developmental quality from low to high students may appear because events are the most cognitively demanding part of a recount text. In this section, students need to recall their experiences, arrange them in sequence, connect the ideas in logical order, elaborate with important details, and maintain grammatical accuracy in developing the story. These multiple components require students to integrate organizational, linguistic, and cognitive skills. According to Flower and Hayes (1981) writing is a complex cognitive process in which writers plan, translate ideas from mind to writing, and review texts. In these findings, low-level students had difficulty coordinating this

process, resulting in weak coherence and limited elaboration. Meanwhile, medium and high-level students were able to manage the cognitive demands to express the experiences in a detailed description and organize the events logically.

These findings are similar to several previous studies. Siska et al. (2025) stated that low-level students had difficulty organizing events in sequence due to limited use of connector words. Then, Cakrawati (2018) showed that idea elaboration is the major difficulty in writing a recount text. These findings support this study's finding that low-level students generally developed events with weak coherence and limited description.

In addition, several previous studies also align with the performance of medium and high-level students. Agustini et al. (2025) demonstrated that most students developed coherent paragraphs and clear development and achieved high coherence scores. Moreover, Mingsakoon and Srinon (2018) implemented genre-based instruction in creating a recount text. The findings showed that the learners were able to develop the events coherently with detailed descriptions. These studies support the finding that medium and high-level students were able to develop events with detailed descriptions in sequence more than low-level students.

In addition, medium and high-level students enriched the events with detailed descriptions and emotional engagement. These elements make the events more communicative and interesting. The reason is that the students not only listed the activity, but also expressed their personal experience through the text. Chen and Huang (2023) demonstrated that emotional engagement contributed to writing ability. This study provides evidence for these findings: greater emotional engagement

enables students to develop a detailed and interesting story.

3. Reorientation

Reorientation is the closing paragraph that contains a closing statement, personal feelings, and reflection related to the events. In this section, the researcher analyzed the completeness of these elements and the students' ways of developing through elaboration, creativity, and emotional engagement. Based on the data, the quality of the students' recount texts ranges from poor to excellent. For low-level students, two students (33%) were categorized as poor and four students (67%) as fair. The students had a weak ability to develop reorientation because they did not develop the reorientation section, or they only developed simple closing statements which were not related to the events.

For the medium category, four students (44%) were categorized as fair, three students (33%) as good, and two students (22%) as excellent. The students showed stronger ability in concluding their story. Half of the students may develop a simple closing statement or personal feelings, but they lack reflection and deeper development. Some students could develop the complete part of reorientation: closing statement, personal feelings, and reflection, but with less development and emotional engagement. Lastly, the rest presented clear conclusions, personal feelings, and reflections with full development and elaboration.

For high-level students, one student (6.7%) was categorized as fair, six students (40%) as good, and eight students (53.3%) as excellent. Most of them were capable of expressing a clear conclusion with a closing statement, personal feelings, and reflection with full development and elaboration. However, some of them had limited

development. Furthermore, one student still had an incomplete part and less development of reorientation. Hence, the result indicated that the quality of reorientation improved across different writing levels. For low-level students, they did not create reorientation or only created very simple closing statements, while medium and high-level students created more complete reorientations: closing statements, personal feelings, and reflections with elaboration and emotional engagement.

The developmental quality from low to high students occurred because the reorientation section requires higher-order thinking than simply summarizing the events. Derewianka and Jones (2016) stated that in the closing stage, writers express attitudes, feelings, or reflections on their experiences. Therefore, in writing orientation section, the students not only summarize the story, but also evaluate their experiences, state their personal feelings, and connect their responses to the events. Hence, low-level students often omit or produce basic closing statements, while higher-level students are better at interpreting the personal response and reflection, making the reorientation section more interesting as a closing part.

Several previous studies are similar to the findings in this study. Senjawati (2016) showed that the students had difficulty in the reorientation section, and they only created basic closing statements. Similarly, Amalina and Yulianto (2024) showed that the students created incomplete reorientation that make the weakness of students in writing recount text. These studies support the findings of this study, which show that low-level students generally omit this section or created only a brief conclusion without elaboration.

The Quality of Lexicogrammatical Features of Students' Recount Texts across Different Writing Ability Levels

The lexicogrammatical features of recount texts consist of five elements: material process, circumstances of time and place, specific participants, past tense, and temporal sequence, as proposed by Gerot and Wignell (1994). The results of analyzing the generic structure across different writing ability levels are presented below.

Table 4. The Quality of Lexicogrammatical Features of Recount Text in terms of Material Process, Temporal Sequence, Specific Participants, Past Tense, and Circumstances of Time and Place across Different Writing Ability Levels

Lexicogrammatical Features					
Lexic	Lev	Poor	Fair	Good	Excell.
Spec. Partic	Low	-	-	2 (33.3%)	4 (66.67%)
	Med	-	-	-	9 (100%)
	High	-	-	-	15 (100%)
Past Tense	Low	1 (16.67%)	1 (16.67%)	3 (50%)	1 (16.67%)
	Med	1 (11.11%)	4 (44.44%)	3 (33.33%)	1 (11.11%)
	High	-	4 (26.7%)	7 (46.7%)	4 (26.7%)
Material Process	Low	-	1 (16.67%)	2 (33.33%)	3 (50%)
	Med	-	-	8 (88.89%)	1 (11.11%)
	High	-	-	3 (20%)	12 (80%)
Circumstance of Time and Place	Low	-	1 (16.67%)	5 (83.33%)	-
	Med	-	-	6 (66.7%)	3 (33.3%)
	High	-	-	5 (33.33%)	10 (66.67%)
Temporal Sequence	Low	2 (33.33%)	4 (66.67%)	-	-

Med	1 (11.1 1%)	5 (55.5 6%)	3 (33.3 3%)	-
High	1 (6.67 %)	5 (33.3 3%)	8 (53.3 3%)	1 (6.67%)

1. Specific Participants

Specific participants mean detailed people, animals, places, or things involved in the text. In addition, references are included in this part. In this study, the researcher focused on analyzing two aspects: the clarity of participants and the consistency of references. Based on the data, two low-level students (33.33%) were categorized as good and four low-level students (66.67%) as excellent. Even though they were the lowest ability, the low-level students were mostly capable of identifying the participant clearly and maintained the references with minor inconsistencies.

Meanwhile, all nine medium-level students and fifteen high-level students achieved 100% which was categorized as excellent. The students clearly identified the specific participants and maintained consistency in the references. It helps readers easily understand the participants in the texts without confusion. Overall, the results indicated that all writing ability levels were able to implement specific participants and maintain consistency. Meanwhile, medium and high-level students showed more consistent reference use than low-level students.

This finding is supported by previous studies, which show that reference is the most commonly used grammatical cohesive in writing. This indicates that the students are familiar with the use of pronouns to connect ideas and identify participants in the text (Agustini et al., 2025; Ariwibowo et al., 2023; Putri et al., 2025). A similar study showed that the students often rely on

personal references and can be categorized as cohesive because they are linked across the sentence (Priyatmojo, 2021). These studies showed that even low-level students still implement participants clearly even with minor inconsistency in implementing the reference.

Previous studies also showed that better writing quality reflects better use of cohesion, especially reference use. Bui (2022) showed that writing quality is related to maintaining text cohesion. Likewise, Pitoyo (2020) found that many students were able to develop cohesive texts even though they had difficulties to connecting the ideas consistently. These studies support the finding of this study that low-level students were able to implement references with minor consistencies while medium and high-level students maintained references consistently. In contrast, some studies reported difficulties, including disconnected writing, unclear essays, and problems using cohesive devices (Pitoyo, 2020; Siregar & Zein, 2023). Similarly, Ariwibowo et al. (2023) used only limited variation in references, such as “I”, “my”, and “me”, resulting in weaker development.

For students, references are easier than cohesive devices because they are common and help avoid repetition. Agustini et al. (2025) and Nurpitriyani (2023) stated that references help the writer connect the ideas and make the text easier to follow. Other studies also showed that students often implemented references rather than cohesive devices because cohesive devices are difficult to apply appropriately (Priyatmojo, 2021; Siregar & Zein, 2023). Meanwhile, low-level students may still have minor mistakes in using references because of a lack of understanding in implementing references appropriately (Bui, 2022; Surjowati et al., 2025).

2. Past Tense

The past tense is a tense used to express past experiences. It aligns with the recount text's purpose to retell past activities. In this study, the researcher focused on the occurrence and consistency of the past tense and analyzed whether inaccuracies influenced the clarity of the events in the text. For low-level students, one student (16.67%) was categorized as poor, one student (16.67%) as fair, three students (50%) as good, and one student (16.67%) as excellent. Most of the students were able to use the past tense appropriately, with minor inaccuracies in shifting to the present tense or no errors in the text. The rest showed limited ability to use the past tense and frequently used the present tense in the text.

As with low-level students, medium-level students were also categorized into four categories: poor, fair, good, and excellent. One student (11.11%) was categorized as poor, four students (44.44%) as fair, three students (33.33%) as good, and one student (11.11%) as excellent. Half of the students could implement the past tense with minor or no errors in the recount text. However, half of them had limited ability to use the past tense in the recount text, with frequent errors in using the present tense.

Meanwhile, high-level students were only categorized into three categories: fair, good, and excellent. Four students (26.7%) were categorized as fair, seven students (46.7%) as good, and four students (26.7%) as excellent. The students had a strong ability to use the past tense in the recount text. This category did not have a poor category. Most of them used the past tense appropriately with minor errors or none in the text. The rest still shifted between past and present tenses frequently in the text. Hence, the result indicated that the quality of the past tense

improved across different writing ability levels. High-level students used greater consistency and accuracy. However, changes in tense from past to present still occurred across different writing ability levels, even among high-level students.

This finding is similar to several previous studies. Several studies showed that students understood that the recount text should use the past tense, but they still made mistakes in verb forms and tense consistency (Ernawati et al., 2025; Pasaribu, 2024; Wei et al., 2023). Mustafa (2021) and Pasaribu (2024) showed that students mostly made errors in using the simple past tense when describing past experiences. Similarly, Nahak et al. (2024) stated that the most common error was misinformation which means the students used incorrect verbs rather than the correct past tense.

High-level students demonstrated greater writing ability, as evidenced by better grammatical accuracy, though this does not necessarily mean that the writing is completely appropriate. Advanced students also still create grammatical errors in syntax, vocabulary, morphology, and language use (Iswati, 2025). In contrast, a study by Lahuerta (2017) showed that lower-level students made more grammatical errors than high-level students. These studies support this study's finding that implementing the past tense becomes a main challenge in developing recount texts. In contrast to the findings in this study, several studies found that learners could use the past tense. Most of the low and medium-level students only made minor errors (Nahak et al., 2024; Subagio & Prawiro, 2022). This result differs from previous studies.

In addition, the shift from past tense to present tense occurs in the recount text because the students still have difficulty

choosing the appropriate verb forms in distinguishing regular and irregular verbs and maintaining tense consistency in the text (Nahak et al., 2024; Pasaribu, 2024). These errors are affected by limited grammar knowledge, first-language interference, limited vocabulary, and lack of proofreading (Mustafa, 2021; Sembiring et al., 2026). Thus, the students understand that the recount text should use the past tense, but they still shift to the present tense in writing recount texts.

3. Material Process

Material process refers to actions, activities, and events performed by the participants. With the implementation of this material process, the author could express actions that happened during the past events in sequence, as it aligns with the social function of recount texts. In this study, the researcher analyzed three aspects of the material process: accuracy, frequency, and effectiveness in retelling the past events.

Based on the data, low-level students were categorized into three categories: fair, good, and excellent. For low-level students, one student (16.67%) was categorized as fair, two students (33.33%) as good, and three students (50%) as excellent. The students were able to implement several material processes, but some were inappropriate, and the text had a brief development.

Meanwhile, medium-level students were categorized into only two categories: good and excellent. Eight students (88.89%) were categorized as good and one student (11.11%) as excellent. Medium-level students developed better than low-level students. Most medium-level students could implement an adequate number of material processes appropriately and effectively develop the recount text, even though minor errors affected accuracy.

In addition, high-level students were also categorized into two categories: good and excellent. There were three students (20%) in the good category and 12 students (80%) in the excellent category. The students showed the strongest ability to implement material processes compared to the low and medium-level students. Most high-level students implemented a high number of material processes accurately and effectively developed detailed events in the recount text while the rest still had minor inappropriate material processes. Overall, the results indicated that all writing ability levels were able to implement the material processes in the recount text, even at low levels. However, the quality improved across different levels with higher-level students using the material process more frequently, accurately, and effectively.

Material process is dominant transitivity because the recount text retells actions and past events (Rosmayanti et al., 2021). In other words, even low-level students could implement the material process because they understood one of the basic linguistic features of recount text: action verbs used to retell past experiences (Novianto et al., 2022). The differences appear not only in the way the material process is presented, but also in the way the students retell the events. Low-level students used very brief or inappropriate material processes, while medium and high-level students used more complete material processes and more detailed events. It indicated that material processes help the students develop a text in sequence (Damopolii et al., 2025; Mishra et al., 2026).

Several studies showed that the material process is mostly implemented in students' recount texts. Rosmayanti et al. (2021) found 108 material processes out of 173 clauses (62.34%), and the learners were capable of

following the grammatical patterns of recount texts. The other study by Novianto et al. (2022) showed a higher number of material processes, around 60 times (70%). These studies support the present findings that all students across different writing ability levels could implement material processes in the recount text. The dominance of material process reflects the students' awareness of the social function of the recount texts to retell past events in sequence.

These previous studies differ from the findings of this study. These previous studies only counted the occurrence of material process. However, this study provides a deeper quality of material process based on occurrence, accuracy, and effectiveness across different writing ability levels. Differences in frequency alone do not guarantee writing quality. Some studies showed that students still struggled with grammar, verbs, and lexical choices, even though they could develop recount texts (Ariani, 2023; Fakhruddin et al., 2023; Siska et al., 2025). These studies align with these findings showing that even medium and high-level students still found minor inappropriate material processes.

High-level students had a better ability to use material processes. They were able to choose appropriate action verbs, use correct verb forms, and develop complete clauses. However, verb forms are one of the main challenges in writing recount text (Ariani, 2023; Pasaribu, 2024). Moreover, a limited vocabulary makes it difficult for low-level students to choose correct action verbs and describe the events in detail (Fakhruddin et al., 2023). Hence, high-level students used a better material processes to develop clear events, while low-level students produced brief, less detailed descriptions.

4. Circumstances of Time and Place

Circumstances of time and place provide information about the text related to when and where the events occurred. In this study, the researcher analyzed three aspects in circumstances of time and place, including presence, clarity, appropriateness and consistency. Based on the data, low-level students were categorized into two categories: fair and good. One low-level student (16.67%) was categorized as fair and five low-level students (83.33%) as good. Most of the students clearly implemented several time and place circumstances, but with limited variety and still generally. These circumstances shaped the recount text and helped readers to know the text's setting: time and location. Meanwhile, one student provided only one type of circumstance, so the contextual information was incomplete, and readers had difficulty understanding the setting of the events.

Medium-level students were categorized into two categories: good and excellent. Six medium-level students (66.7%) were categorized as good and three students (33.3%) as excellent. Similarly, most of the medium-level students used several circumstances of time and places appropriately with a general and limited variety while the rest of them implemented many and specific circumstances. All of them effectively developed the time and location in the recount text and helped the readers follow the sequence of events.

As with medium-level students, high-level students were also categorized into two categories: good and excellent. Five students (33.33%) were categorized as good and ten students (66.67%) as excellent. The students showed the strongest ability to implement circumstances of time and place in the recount text. Most of the students used many circumstances of time and places in specific,

appropriate ways, while the rest used only several circumstances in general and with a limited variety. All of them effectively developed the time and location in the recount text and helped the readers to follow the sequence of events. Thus, the result showed that the students were able to implement circumstances of time and places in the recount texts, even at a low level. Nevertheless, the quality improved across different writing ability levels, with high-level students employing more varied and detailed circumstances of time and place, making clear the contextual information and supporting the sequence of events.

All students could include circumstantial details of time and place, even for low-level students, because they need to give explanations related to the basic information about time and place of the story. This finding aligns with a study by Cakrawati (2018) which states that time and place are basic language features for developing events and supporting the presentation and chronological events.

High-level students showed that the improvement was not only in the occurrence of circumstances of time and place, but also in the way the writer implemented them in the text. The students implemented specific, varied, and consistent circumstances to explain the setting of the story. This is related to studies by Faradina and Emilia (2024) and Sugiarto (2024), who stated that higher-level writers implemented rich language resources to achieve the social function. Contrastingly, one low-level student used only one type of circumstance, that makes incomplete information about time and place in the text. It made difficult for the readers to understand the setting and flow of the text. Moybeka et al. (2023) and Rababah (2022) stated that providing clear information helps the writer

communicate ideas effectively and increase the writing quality.

Several studies support the claim that the circumstances of time and place are important in recounting text. Anggini and Kurniawan (2020) and Cakrawati (2018) stated that the recount text requires simple past tense, action verbs, temporal sequence, and also circumstances of time and place to tell what, when, and where the events happened. Other studies also show that circumstances of time and place affect the contextual meaning. Circumstances as clause elements that tell where, when, how, why, or with whom an activity occurs, and SFL analysis is crucial to help the teacher understand how the students create contextual meaning in writing (Anggini & Kurniawan, 2020; Damopolii et al., 2025). Recount text is valued because the chronological order help students develop and organize the experiences in sequence (Siska et al., 2025).

High-level students have better knowledge of how to provide clear contextual information in the recount text. They were able to use specific and varied circumstances of time and place and maintaining the sequence of events. Some studies showed that genre-based and SFL-based instruction helps learners understand the development of recount texts to achieve the communicative purpose (Herman et al., 2023; Mingsakoon & Srinon, 2018).

5. Temporal Sequence

A temporal sequence is a linguistic component that connect events logically in a text. It is a crucial part of recount texts to develop events in chronological order so readers can easily follow the flow of events. In this study, the researcher analyzed three aspects of temporal sequence: the appearance of temporal sequence, the variety of

sequencing, and the chronological ordering of the events. Based on the data, low-level students were categorized as poor and fair. Two students (33.33%) were categorized as poor and four students (66.67%) as fair. The students used none or a limited number and variety of temporal sequences, resulting in minimal chronological development of events.

For medium-level students, one student (11.11%) was categorized as poor, five students (55.56%) as fair, and three students (33.33%) as good. Most students used a limited variety of temporal sequence and did not consistently maintain them in the text, but the events were arranged in sequence. Then, some students used a variety of temporal sequences with minor repetition, making the events coherently arranged. However, one student did not use any temporal sequence, and the events were only listed, reducing the coherence and making it difficult to understand the events in sequence.

For high-level students, a student (6.67%) was categorized as poor, five students (33.33%) as fair, eight students (53.33%) as good, and a student (6.67%) as excellent. Most students employed a number of temporal sequences to organize the events coherently and showed a clear chronological sequence of events. However, some students used a limited variety of temporal sequence and were inconsistent throughout the text. Overall, the quality of temporal sequence improved across different writing ability levels, with higher-level students using a high number and variety of temporal sequences to organize the events coherently, even though some students still used a limited variety and were inconsistent throughout the text.

When low-level students used a limited temporal sequence or none, the events were only listed, implying or minimally developed, which reduced coherence and make it difficult to follow the flow of the story. Siska et al. (2025) stated that students ignore transition signals, resulting in unclear chronological order and weak organization in writing recount texts. Meanwhile, the medium-level students demonstrated a clear development stage. Most of the students could arrange the events in sequence, but the temporal sequence was limited in variety and not maintained consistently. Temporal sequence helps indicate sequence, but the students used only simple and familiar temporal sequences rather than a wider variety (Choemue & Bram, 2021). Lastly, the high-level students showed the greatest ability to implement many temporal sequences with greater variety to develop the events in sequence. This finding is similar to these studies showing that high-proficiency students showed stronger discourse competence, and more advanced students used a wide range of discourse markers to connect the ideas logically and maintain cohesion (Alqurashi, 2025; Zainal et al., 2025).

These findings are similar to the genre-based description of recount text. Siska et al. (2025) stated that recount texts aim to retell the events in order, and the chronological pattern helps students build coherence and develop the events clearly. Moreover, in a transitivity-based recount, temporal sequence is the same with material process and circumstances of time and place becoming one of the significant grammatical patterns (Rosmayanti et al., 2021).

Similar patterns occurred in narrative and other writing studies. The implementation of temporal sequence was used to organize the events coherently and to clarify the text. A

study by Sophea and Chanyoo (2022) found significant differences in the use of temporal sequence across different writing ability levels. Intermediate writers sometimes used better temporal sequencing than advanced writers. This present study found that there was improvement across different writing ability levels, but high-level students did not always use temporal sequence accurately, appropriately, and effectively.

Temporal sequence reflects genre knowledge and discourse competence. Students who mastered the generic structure were able to implement temporal sequence to connect events in sequence, while low-level students understood the event being told but needed guidance on linguistic resources clearly (Chen & Huang, 2023; Siska et al., 2025). Limited vocabulary and limited cohesive devices lead to simple or repetitive temporal sequences, reducing variety and affecting the flow of the text (Alqurashi, 2025; Mishra et al., 2026).

CONCLUSION

The findings indicated that writing ability levels affected the quality of the recount text, and the improvement varied across different aspects. In several aspects, students of different writing levels were able to achieve them, even low-level students. First, all students across different levels achieved the communicative purpose of the recount text retelling past experiences to inform or entertain. Second, they were generally able to develop orientation by introducing background information, implementing specific participants, material process, as well as circumstances of time and place. Higher-level students developed better than low-level students.

Moreover, the quality of several aspects improved as writing ability levels increased, including events, reorientation, past tense,

and temporal sequence. For the generic structure, higher-level students were able to develop complete and engaging orientations, produce events in sequence and with deeper elaboration, and create complete reorientations consisting of personal feelings, closing statements, and reflection. For lexicogrammatical features, higher-level students were able to maintain the references, used material process frequently, accurately, and effectively, used a greater number and variety of temporal sequences to organize the flow of the story, and used the accuracy and consistency of past tense throughout the text. However, tense shifts from past to present tense and inconsistent use of temporal sequence were still found even among high-level students.

Based on the result, there are several limitations of this study. This study only analyzed the recount texts from a limited number of participants in junior high school level and used personal recount texts. Therefore, there are several recommendations for this study. For the English teachers, they need to provide explicit instruction to implement generic structure and lexicogrammatical features of recount text and guide the learners to develop the recount texts clearly by elaborating the ideas, organizing the events in sequence, using past tense consistency, and implementing temporal sequences and circumstances of time and place. Moreover, the teacher should give detailed feedback on the students' recount texts so the students understand their mistakes and develop better quality recount texts. Students need to practice writing recount texts regularly and revise them to improve their writing quality.

For future researchers, they may conduct similar studies with larger texts from higher educational levels, analyze the different types of recount texts, analyze different types of

recount texts, or analyze the implementation of instructional approaches in improving the students' writing skills.

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