



Analysing Tenth-Grade Students' Difficulty and Their Perceptions in Writing Recount Text

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Article Info

Article History:

Accepted 30 March 2024

Approved 8 June 2024

Published 15

September 2024

Keywords:

Difficulties,
Perceptions,
Writing, Recount
Text

Abstract

One of the most important skills in studying English, particularly for EFL students, is writing recount texts. However, a lot of students struggle to grasp the components needed to write the texts. With the focus on linguistic and structural components, this study investigates difficulties faced by tenth-grade students at SMA Al Fusha Kedungwuni when producing recount texts. Furthermore, it examined how students perceive these difficulties and how their perspectives correspond with the understanding of the writing process. A mixed-methods technique was used in the study, which combined an analysis of the students' recount texts with a survey of their perceptions. The text reveals that students face structural and linguistic difficulties in writing recount texts. Structural difficulties include unclear chronological order, inadequate orientation, unclear events, weak or missing reorientation, and difficulty managing length and detail. Linguistic difficulties include tense usage, vocabulary choice, cohesion, grammar, sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation. Students' perceptions show sufficient engagement with critical stages of the writing process, such as planning and revising. However, self-reported data may introduce bias, as students may not accurately assess their own difficulties. This highlights a gap between self-awareness and actual performance in writing recount texts. The findings suggest the need for teachers to emphasize their teaching on recount text structure, incorporating activities to strengthen understanding. In addition, students should master past tense grammatical rules and practice changing present tense to past tense. Curriculum developers should emphasize the writing process, provide detailed explanations, and integrate grammar instruction.

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p-ISSN 2087-0108

e-ISSN 2502-4566

INTRODUCTION

Writing abilities are crucial in education, which enable individuals to think clearly, communicate effectively, and interact with others meaningfully. They are essential for academic success, interpersonal communication, and future employment opportunities. Writing proficiency has a direct correlation to academic success, enhancing grades and overall performance. Students with strong writing skills can explain their comprehension of a subject, make arguments, provide evidence to back up claims, and exhibit critical thinking skills. Analytical abilities and the capacity to create persuasive arguments can be developed through writing, which affects personal development.

However, writing is often overlooked in English language instruction in Indonesia due to challenges such as low motivation, boring teaching methods, lack of instructional materials, and limited vocabulary and grammar understanding. To address this issue, Indonesia implemented the Genre-based Approach (GBA) in the 2004 curriculum, covering several genres or texts. The approach improves the understanding of writing organization by analyzing and discussing purposeful texts and their traditions. Teaching writing as an aspect of language teaching can be used as a standard for the effectiveness of language teaching since it requires productivity that comes from teaching other language skills. Teaching writing is challenging because students must learn how to express ideas and problems clearly and coherently.

One of the texts senior high school students need to master is the recount text to tell factual stories, personal experiences, or historical events. Recount texts consist of three generic structures: orientation, series of events, and re-orientation. Finding the right balance between writing their own "voice and ideas," adhering to academic writing rules, and appreciating the contributions of others' ideas can be particularly difficult, Mallia (2017).

Many students face difficulties when composing English recount texts, such as

struggling to formulate ideas, putting words in the right order, narrowing down focused vocabulary, and making mistakes when using grammar rules.

Andayani (2013) examined students' writing abilities in recount text, focusing on organization, grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, content, and organization. Anggara and Haryudin (2020) found that female students made 12 errors of omission, 13 errors in addition, 21 errors in misinformation, and 1 error in misordering, while male students made 5 errors of omission, 5 errors in addition, 27 errors in misinformation, and 1 error in misordering. Aulia (2020) investigated learners' difficulties in writing recount text and the English teacher's solutions. Results showed difficulties in generic structure (26.08%), past verbs (21.74%), spelling (33.13%), and vocabulary (14.04%). Teachers' solutions included explanations, memorization, and dictionary consulting. Fernando (2024) examined the challenges faced by tenth-grade students at SMAN 5 Pontianak in writing recount texts, focusing on language use, structure, and content development. Results showed limited vocabulary, verb tense issues, lack of coherence, and logical organization issues. Giawa (2024) identified grammatical, mechanical, and dominant errors in first-grade accounting students at SMK Negeri 1 Amandraya. Hasibuan (2018) investigated students' errors in using lexicogrammatical features in writing recount texts at SMA Negeri 4 Padangsidimpuan. Iriana (2018) examined the writing skills of senior high school students in recount text, focusing on their composition and use of linguistic features. Marbun (2022) figured out that teachers used various techniques to overcome difficulties, such as semi-guided picture series, random words, text modelling, and mini dictionary products in grammar. In addition, Mare (2022) discovered that most students' writing difficulties come from their inability to comprehend sentence structure and vocabulary. Meanwhile, Sadewa (2015) analyzed the recount text written by tenth-grade students at SMAN 2 Blitar, finding errors in orientation and events. Salawazo (2020) discovered difficulties in vocabulary, organization, mechanics, and grammar.

Perception is the consciousness of particular things presented to senses, according to James (2008), and involves additional processing of sensory information. Language choice is influenced by sociology and perception, with the brain and language collaborating to affect intonation, language level, and dictionaries. Understanding how language changes due to human perception is crucial in linguistics. Studies have shown that students' perceptions of their foreign language teaching significantly impact their motivation to learn English. A study by Assaggaf and Bamahra (2016) figured out that portfolios can enhance writing instruction and increase enjoyment. Azarfam (2016) found that analytical attributes can help students become more conscious of writing components. Bekleyen and Selimoğlu (2016) explored university level learners' perceptions of autonomous language learning in Turkey, finding teachers as more responsible and students sharing responsibility. Marrs (2016) found that students have a comprehensive understanding of critical thinking, but cultural background influences their writing styles. Tahira's (2019) study suggests reviewing writing instruction and guidelines to accommodate a wider spectrum of expression.

The researcher chose this topic due to its relevance in high school writing, particularly recount text, and its relevance to Indonesian schools' national curriculum. Understanding students' difficulties in creating recount texts can help teachers adjust their strategies and improve student outcomes. The study aims to examine students' perspectives, revealing their approach to the writing process, and helping teachers adapt their teaching methods.

This study examines the difficulties faced by tenth-grade students at SMA Al Fusha Kedungwuni in writing recount texts. It aims to provide teachers with insights into areas like grammar, sentence construction, and concept organization that students struggle with. The findings will help teachers design effective classes that address these difficulties, such as encouraging better thought organization or teaching grammar rules. The study also explored how students perceived their difficulties, helping

teachers understand the connection between their writing proficiency and their awareness of their difficulties. This knowledge can help teachers modify their teaching methods to better meet students' needs and improve their writing performance.

To gain a deeper understanding of writing difficulties, combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies can provide a more in-depth understanding of students' difficulties and perceptions in writing recount texts.

METHOD

This study used a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design, combining quantitative and qualitative research approaches. This strategy mixes the best aspects of both data, allowing for a broad picture of the study topic and further analysis through qualitative examination, Sugiyono (2016).

The subject of this study was the tenth-grade students of SMA Al Fusha Kedungwuni, Pekalongan in academic year 2024/2025. The researcher focused on the students' difficulties and their perceptions in writing recount text. The population of this study was all tenth-grade students of SMA Al Fusha Kedungwuni, Pekalongan in academic year 2024/2025. The sample was a tenth-grade class which consists of 21 students. The class was selected randomly.

Sugiyono (2016) defines research variables as information determined by the researcher. This study used two variables: students' writing proficiency and perceptions of recount texts, and structural and linguistic difficulties. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed in this study. Four data had been needed in this research through a questionnaire and document, those are: 1) The result of the students' self-reflection statements for recount text writing 2) The result of the students' engagement survey. 3) The result of teacher's reflection for recount text writing teaching class. 4) The students' recount text writing.

This study used a survey for students' self-reflection and engagement, a teacher's reflective form, and students' recount texts to gather

qualitative and quantitative data. The survey used Likert-Scale Questions to measure students' engagement and confidence, while the teacher's reflective form provided open-ended questions for observations and reflections. Qualitative data was collected through online questionnaires in Google Form, using Fredrick's theory to explore students' engagement and self-reflection. The engagement questionnaire included 15 questions, focusing on behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. The responses were calculated using a distribution formula. These qualitative methods provided deeper insights into students' experiences, perceptions, and preferences regarding writing recount text difficulties.

This research collected data on students' recount text, their perceptions of writing recount texts, and the teacher's reflection on the teaching process. The researcher prepared three primary instruments: a survey for students, a form for teachers, and a rubric for analyzing students' recount texts. The teacher was asked to reflect on students' engagement, common difficulties, teaching strategies, and suggestions for improvement. Students' recount texts were analyzed using a pre-designed rubric to evaluate structural elements, linguistic accuracy, coherence, and content relevance. The study aimed to understand students' experiences and strategies in recount text writing.

Triangulation was applied in research to gather and combine data related to a phenomenon. To ensure validity and reliability, researchers cross-referenced data from students' texts, survey responses, and teacher reflections to understand their difficulties, perceptions, and understanding of recount writing process. This approach helped researchers understand and address research challenges.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Students' Structural and Linguistic Difficulties in Writing Recount Text .

The study identified linguistic and structural difficulties faced by tenth-grade students at SMA Al Fusha Kedungwuni in writing recount texts. A sample of 21 students

was selected and analyzed using a recount text scoring rubric by Hyland (2007). The average score was 67, with the highest and lowest scores being 88 and 41, respectively, categorized as exemplary and unsatisfactory, with scores ranging from 20 to 60. Only 10% or 2 out of 21 students achieving an exemplary category, indicating specific writing difficulties.

The researcher analyzed students' recount text structure using Hyland's rubric, revealing a minimal category score of 72, with a range of 40-100, indicating a range of low to high quality. Students faced structural difficulties in recount text structures, including 10% lacking clear chronological order, 24% lacking orientation, 10% having unclear events, 43% lacking reorientation, and 67% struggling with managing length and detail. The common structural difficulty was managing length and detail, with 67% of students struggling to expand their ideas confidently. This aligns with previous studies by Iriana (2018) and Rahayu (2018), which identified 5 of the 8 students having their own writing style and producing a well-written product. However, all students showed potential for improvement in applying recount text composition but still needed to improve their grammatical range and accuracy

Table 1. Structural Difficulties

Problem	Percentage
Lack of clear chronological order	10
Inadequate orientation	24
Unclear events	10
Weak or missing orientation	43
Difficulty in managing length and detail	67

The study identified linguistic difficulties in 19% tense usage, 10% vocabulary choice, 10% cohesion and coherence, 38% grammar and sentence structure, and 29% spelling and punctuation. The linguistic difficulty most students undergone was grammar and sentence structure, with 38% struggling to maintain the tense in past form consistently. This aligns with previous studies by Marie (2022), Musabbihin

(2017), Salsabila (2023), Utami and Apsari (2020), and Winarno (2020). Other difficulties found through deeper analysis on the students' original recount texts included vocabulary choice, cohesion and coherence, spelling and punctuation.

Table 2. Linguistic Difficulties

Problem	Percentage
Tense usage	19
Vocabulary choice	24
Cohesion and coherence	10
Grammar and sentence structure	38
Spelling and punctuation	29

Students' Perceptions on Their Difficulties.

The research aimed to understand students' perceptions of difficulties in writing recount texts. A survey was conducted to assess self-reported challenges, confidence, and engagement with the writing process. Results showed that 76% of students could explain recount text, 71% understood generic structures, and 86% knew the social function of writing a recount text. The survey revealed that 52% of students felt confident in writing an interesting orientation, 67% could organize their story correctly, and 52% felt confident in writing well and interestingly, indicating a strong understanding of recount text structures. The 29% of students knew how to use past tense verbs correctly, and 14% believed they could use time connectives words to connect their ideas and write recount texts. However, many students expressed frustration with using past tense correctly, organizing grammar and sentence structure, and using numbers and symbols. A student stated, "I don't know how to use verbs" and "I have problem using verbs used in telling past events."

The majority of students gave positive responses to the survey questions about their self-reported challenges, confidence in writing, and overall engagement with the writing process. Only 14% responded negatively, but many students who preferred to choose 'fair' rather than 'agree' or 'strongly agree' were classified as

negative responses because they could not ensure their capability and difficulty in writing recount text. The survey findings reveal that students perceive organizing ideas and using the correct verb tenses as the most significant difficulties in writing recount texts. This is supported by the results of the open-ended survey in the form of reflection filled by their teacher, who stated that grammar was the common areas where students struggled. These perceptions align with the common themes found in their responses, suggesting that further support in these areas may be necessary.

Perceptions Reflecting Their Writing Process

The research question examined students' perceptions of difficulties in the writing process, particularly in producing recount texts. The survey revealed that 67% of students found it easy to choose an event or story to write, while 10% found it easier. The majority of students understood recount text and its generic structures. 67% agreed that they could organize their recount text in the correct order of events, while only 5% were confident in their ability. The remaining 29% were unclassified and neutral. All students viewed drafting, checking, and revising as necessary, with 87% agreeing that they would check and revise their writing after finishing it.

The analysis of 21 recount texts revealed that 10% lacked clear chronological order, 24% had inadequate orientation, 10% had unclear events, 43% had weak or missing reorientation, and 67% had difficulty in managing length and detail in describing each part of the recount text structures.

The sequence of events in the text was slightly unclear due to the lack of strong time markers or transitions. The students' text also showed inadequate orientation, as it could be expanded by describing the journey itself. The students also had difficulty in managing length and detail in describing each part of the recount text structures. The reorientation excerpts from the students' text were weak, as they could be expanded to include specific lessons learned or personal feelings about the family trip.

The S11's recount text:

During the last holiday, my friends and I bought snacks after the evening prayer. In the middle of our outing, a heavy rain suddenly started, and we sought shelter. While we were at the shelter, a bizarre person came and began singing next to us. Feeling uncomfortable, we decided to move to another location. However, the strange person followed us. We quickly ran as fast as we could, not paying attention to the torrential rain.

Lastly, the text missing reorientation was the S11's recount text, where the text described a holiday outing where a bizarre person singed next to them, leading to a lack of reorientation. The text could be improved by adding a reflection at the end of the recount to help students understand the writing process better.

The students' recount text included several examples of linguistic difficulties, including 19% tense usage, 10% vocabulary choice, 10% cohesion and coherence, 38% grammar and sentence structure, and 29% spelling and punctuation.

The tense usage was mostly correct, but there are some errors in the past tense usage. For consistency, the text should remain in the past tense for past events. The vocabulary choice is also problematic, with some instances of 'midway' being replaced by 'then'. The text also lacked cohesion and coherence, with some phrases lacking proper capitalization and proper nouns. The sentence structure was less cohesive, with some phrases lacking proper nouns and proper capitalization. The use of parentheses in the text was unconventional and disrupts the flow. The student should replace or rephrase the text to improve readability.

The spelling and punctuation were also problematic. The excerpt from the S7's recount text, "Last year's vacation my family and I went to Dieng", should be added a comma to make it less awkward and have clearer phrasing. The S4's recount text mentioned arriving at Villa at 12.00 after a 4-hour trip with a bus, while the S4's recount text used 'a 4 hour' and should be corrected to 'a 4-hour'. The S7's recount text, "On the first day, I arrived at Villa at 12.00 after a 4 hour trip with a bus", described coming to school

late due to waking up late and not having breakfast. They usually walk to school ~~by walking~~, but on that day, they took public transportation instead. The time expression '7:00 a.m.' should be consistently punctuated as '7:00 a.m.' The time expression '7.00am' should be consistently punctuated as '7:00 a.m.' The text also lacked commas in the time expression '7.00am', which should be consistent with '7:00 a.m.'

Many recount texts lacked evidence of planning or revisions, with ideas appearing disorganized or incomplete. Some verbs in simple past tense were missing or incorrectly used, and inconsistent verb tense usage in present. Some texts also had limited use of conjunctions, making them less cohesive. The analysis of students' recount texts supported their self-reported challenges with structural and linguistic features. While many students demonstrated understanding of all parts, fewer were able to provide a reflection or organize events chronologically, suggesting a partial understanding of recount text structure. However, many students used past tense verbs appropriately, provided transitions for cohesiveness, and had well-structured sentences, suggesting a partial understanding of recount text language features.

The study's findings suggested that teachers should place greater emphasis on teaching recount text structure explicitly, incorporating activities that strengthen students' understanding of orientation, events, and reorientation. Additionally, integrating process-based writing strategies could address the observed gaps in planning and revising. One limitation of this study is its focus on a single grade level at SMA Al Fusha Kedungwuni, which may limit the generalizability of the findings.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed that students faced structural and linguistic difficulties in writing recount texts. Structural difficulties included unclear chronological order, inadequate

orientation, unclear events, weak or missing reorientation, and difficulty in managing length and detail. 67% of students struggled with managing length and detail, while 43% struggle with weak or missing reorientation. Linguistic difficulties included tense usage, vocabulary choice, cohesion, grammar, sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation. 38% of students found grammar and sentence structure challenging, and many students made errors in tense usage and punctuation. Students' perceptions of the writing process, such as planning and revising, showed sufficient engagement. However, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias, as students may not accurately assess their own difficulties. This highlights a gap between self-awareness and actual performance in writing recount texts.

In addition, this study also provides practical recommendations for teachers, students, and curriculum developers to improve recount text writing skills. Teachers should emphasize explicit teaching of recount text structure, incorporating activities to strengthen students' understanding of orientation, events, and reorientation. Integrated process-based writing strategies can address gaps in planning and revising. Students should master past tense grammatical rules, practice transforming present tense to past tense, familiarize themselves with recount text structures, and plan their text for better coherence. Pre-writing activities can enhance their writing process and help them tackle structural and linguistic difficulties. Curriculum developers should emphasize the writing process, provide detailed explanations and examples of recount text structure, and integrate grammar instruction into writing, particularly recount text. Addressing these linguistic and structural difficulties through curriculum design can significantly enhance students' writing skills and overall English confidence.

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