



Teacher's Problems and Strategies in Teaching Writing for the Seventh Grade Students at MTs Al-Hidayah

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Abstract

Generally, teaching writing is not an easy thing. This is because writing is more complex than other skills in English. This research aimed to find out the Indonesian English teachers' problems and the strategies used in teaching and learning writing skills in the classroom. This research was conducted in MTs Al-Hidayah. The researchers occupied descriptive qualitative research as the research design. The data were collected by interviewing an English teacher and some students in the seventh grade, and by observing their classroom during teaching and learning writing skill activities. Besides, the researchers collected some documentation and video recordings to support the data and additional information. There were several results that the researchers found while conducting the research. The first result is about the problem faced by the English teacher which is related to the students' ability. It consisted of the students' lack of vocabulary mastery, grammatical rules, low motivation, and lack of teachers' class management. Then, the teaching strategy used by the teacher was the Grammatical Translation Method (GTM). Shortly, the problems faced by English teachers in teaching writing are mostly because of students' lack of vocabulary and understanding of grammatical rules. To overcome those problems, the teacher applied the GTM. The function of this research is to give additional information to the teachers and readers about teachers' problems and strategies of teaching writing.

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning English is taught in four basic skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Each skill has its own obstacles to be taught to the language learners. They are related to each other. In this case, to avoid misunderstanding, those skills should be mastered well. From those skills, writing is more complex than this of course (Harmer, 2001). The complex process consists of searching for a topic, thinking, arranging, elaborating, and delivering an idea.

For language learners, writing is known as a crucial ability too. To create good writing the writers should have skills to enhance their ideas. They need to be concerned with the components of the writing such as vocabulary, grammar, mechanism, and others (Raputri et al., 2022). In addition, writing is a process of thinking in which the writer discovers, organizes, and communicates their thought to the reader (Wingersky, 1999). The writer should open their minds to elaborate and convey their knowledge starting from the framework of their paper. It can begin with the title, main idea, sentence, or even text.

If someone wants to write, they need to prepare much knowledge about what they want to write and follow writing rules. Furthermore, Oshima and Hogue (2007) state that writing is not only the activity of thinking about what to say and how to say it but also making changes or editing and some corrections in the text. In addition, Harmer (2004) states that writing shares equal billing with other skills; where students write predominantly to augment their learning of the grammar and vocabulary of the language. Therefore, these facts make most students conclude that writing is a difficult skill so they lack of confidence to start writing activities.

For the students, writing is not only an option but a necessity. Based on the syllabus of the 2013 Curriculum, there are five kinds of functional texts. They should be mastered by junior high school students in learning English writing such as descriptive, recount, narratives,

and procedures text (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2017). Meanwhile, as teachers, teaching writing also is not an easy thing. Many English teachers say teaching writing is difficult (Thuy, 2009). Moreover, teaching writing is crucial and should be improved constantly (Jurianto et al., 2015). They should have good strategies to reach their goals. Considering the role of the teacher is very important. When students learn writing skills, they need a teacher to guide them (Brown, 2000). Indeed, most of the teachers faced the problem while they were teaching writing. Baker et al. (2008) declare that many teachers face the problem of teaching writing specifically in implementing writing to learn. It can be because the student rarely writes and reads a book.

Strategy can be defined as the ways or plans to achieve the goals. As Nag et al. (2007) state that strategy is the determination of the adoption of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals. It is generally tasked with determining strategy. This research refers to the strategy used by the teacher in conducting the teaching and learning process and also how to solve the problem faced in reaching the goals.

Relating to this research, there has been some previous research about teachers' problems and techniques in teaching writing as the guidance in conducting this research. The first is Muslimah (2013), whose research aimed to describe the teaching techniques of writing skills to the tenth-grade students at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta. The design of this research was descriptive qualitative research in which the data were collected by using observation, interviews, and documents. The result of the research showed that the techniques used by the teacher in teaching writing skills used pictures, discussions, and presentations. The problems faced by the teacher such as the discussion technique in passive students, students' limited vocabulary and grammar, difficulties in developing and organizing paragraphs, and limited time in teaching writing. The solutions to the writing skill problem that the teacher conducted such as

pushing them to be active, repeating grammar and practicing vocabulary, making paragraphs using correct tense, motivating students in drilling vocabularies, and practicing writing.

The second was Almubark (2016) conducted research. His research aimed to look into various challenges encountered by English second language teachers in teaching writing skills in ordinary classrooms of universities. This research focused on identifying the problems faced by the teachers of the Arts Colleges at the University of Jazan. This research was a descriptive qualitative method that used survey forms of questionnaires to investigate the problems faced by teachers when teaching writing skills. The findings of this research not only revealed the problematic factors but also proposed some practical measures to help address the situation.

The two of previous studies about teachers' problems faced and about the strategies used in teaching writing skills carried out the researchers' interest in exploring the teacher problem faced and the strategies used in teaching writing. They have already explored the condition of teaching writing at the senior high school and university level. Here, the researchers are curious to know about the condition of teaching writing at another student level in Indonesia. In this research, the researchers investigated the English teachers at the junior high school level precisely MTs Al-Hidayah Gunungpati, Semarang. In this school, the students have already learned about some kinds of text, one of them is descriptive text. It is the first kind of text that they have learned. Also, it is judged as the simplest text from others. Hence, the researchers focused on investigating teaching writing in descriptive text. Hopefully, the result of this research will provide new information related to the teaching of writing skills in the education field. It will be a good reference in preparing for writing class.

METHOD

Relating to the background of the studies, the purpose of this research was to find out the

problem faced by the teacher when she taught their students in the classroom. Besides, this research also aimed to discover the teaching writing strategies used by the teacher. The approach of this research was a descriptive qualitative research design. It was because the researchers observed and described the teacher problems and strategies faced in teaching writing descriptive texts in the classroom.

The qualitative method refers to a collection of information that includes types of data which combined into the collection of information as documentation. They are numbers, words, pictures, video, audio, and concepts. Those sequences are also stated by Sugiyono (2012) who stated that several methods in collecting data such as observation, interview, documentation, questionnaire, and gathering them in a bundle. This research was conducted at MTs Al-Hidayah, Gunungpati, Semarang. In this school, English subjects are held twice a week. Then, there was no additional class.

In this research, the researchers applied interview and observation to collect the data and then made documentation and video recordings to add the information. It is supported by Sandelowski (2000) who said that the researchers need to develop an effective survey to engage participants in the description of the essential policy elements responses. It is because survey is a part of instrument in collecting data. Each kind of instruments has their own role to contribute for building accurate research findings.

By interviewing the English teacher and seventh-grade students at MTs Al-Hidayah, the researchers got a lot of information related to this research. Additionally, the researchers observed the seventh-grade classroom to learn more about the condition of the class during teaching and learning activities. In the classroom, there were 42 students. So, they are in a big class.

Meanwhile, in the data analysis process, the researchers used thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). It is used to analyze data to identify patterns or themes

through data that has been collected by researchers. There are three steps to analyzing the data, firstly familiarizing and organizing, familiarizing means the researchers understand everything related to the problems and techniques in writing a descriptive text while organizing means the researchers gather the data through observation and interviews with English teachers and students. Secondly, coding and reducing, coding means putting a code of the data to make it easier to understand, whereas reducing means cutting some of the data if it is not related to research questions or the focus of the thesis. Then, interpreting and representing are the last of the steps in analyzing data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Regarding to the aim of this research which investigated the problems faced and the strategies employed by the teacher during the teaching and learning process specifically writing skills, therefore, the result of this research is divided into two parts. The first is the problems that English teachers faced in teaching writing. Based on the analysis done by using thematic analysis as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), it can be concluded that the first problem is students' lack of vocabulary mastery. It can be seen when they do not know what and how they should do after the teacher gives them instruction related to the subject matters of teaching and learning activities in the classroom. Here is a piece of the interview between the researcher and the teacher:

Researcher: "What is the students' first problem in understanding your writing class Ma'am?" (*"Apa masalah siswa yang pertama dalam memahami mata kelas menulismu Bu?"*)

Teacher: "Their first difficulties is most of them lack in vocabulary knowledge, they often fail to interpret what I instructed" (*"Kesulitan pertama mereka adalah sebagian besar dari mereka memiliki kemampuan kosa kata yang rendah, seringnya mereka gagal dalam menerjemahkan apa yang saya intruksikan."*)

From the interview between the researcher and the teacher, we found the students did not have much vocabulary knowledge. This problem appeared can be caused by nowadays English is eliminated from Elementary School. Henceforth, they learned English for the first time in Junior High School, except for those who got private English lessons or those who studied in private schools.

Regarding the vocabulary cases, this problem was also found in the research of Farooq et al. (2020), they found that the most serious problems were vocabulary deficiency, L1 interference, and confusion in grammatical rules. However, the students feel difficulties in writing. Therefore, it can be said that students need to learn English from an early age since some aspects such as vocabulary must be practiced. The problems faced by the respondents have answered the objective of this research namely for exploring the writing challenges for the second language learners. In collecting the data, this research surveyed answering the research questions. The respondents of this research were students of public sector colleges.

Likewise, Alisha et al. (2019) they conducted research about English Foreign Language writing difficulties then the result showed that the difficulties of the respondents significantly affected their vocabulary. Their vocabulary was lacking. Additionally, they were identified had limited knowledge about grammatical rules. They felt confused in choosing word appropriately. Besides, in learning words they also felt difficulties in spelling the words correctly. Those phenomena have answered the research questions of their research. The purposes of their research were focused on discovering the students' problems in writing skills. In this case, the occupied qualitative design is the research design. The total number of respondents was thirty students which selected purposively. The instrument of this research was a questionnaire namely fifteen closed and one open-ended items. In short, the researchers argued that writing skills matters

should be an important issue that needs to be discussed more.

Similarly, Thahirah et al. (2023) also tried to investigate the students' difficulties in writing skills. The research focused on finding the most main difficulties felt by the respondents and attempted to reveal how the respondents overcame their difficulties. The object of this research was writing the thesis background. The total number of this research was 8 students. They are students of a university majoring in English Education Program in the academic year 2018. The approach of this research was qualitative design. In conducting this research, the researchers applied documents and interviews as the instruments of the research. As a result, the findings showed that the students' difficulties in writing thesis backgrounds such as lack of vocabulary, grammar, writing, and organizing ideas, important and novelty. Then, to solve their problems they need creating with their supervisor, join and enhance doing more practice, and work independently. Briefly, they concluded that they still lack in writing ability.

Besides, the next points from the interview are shown below.

Researcher: "Is there any other reasons why their English ability still low, Ma'am?" (*Apakah ada alasan lainnya mengapa kemampuan Bahasa Inggris mereka masih rendah, Bu?*)

Teacher: "Yes, there are some reasons that supporting their lack ability in English too such as lack in mastering grammar, low motivation because this school is located in rural area and some of them are coming from broken family". (*Iya, ada juga beberapa faktor pendukung yang membuat mereka rendah dalam kemampuan Bahasa Inggrisnya seperti rendahnya penguasaan tentang grammar, rendahnya motivasi karena sekolah ini berlokasi dipedesaan dan beberapa mereka berasal dari rumah tangga yang gagal*).

As shown above, academically, the second problem is students' lack of understanding of the grammatical rules. The same as the first problem, it is also caused by the absence of English subjects in Elementary School. They only have little preliminary knowledge of English, especially grammatical

rules. The third problem is students' low motivation in learning English. It happens because the school is located in a rural area where English seems not very important. In addition, many students come from broken families. These conditions affect their motivation, not only in learning English but also in learning other subjects as well.

The grammatical issues in writing class were also found by Amelya et al. (2022), whose research purposed to explore the difficulties of the students in writing a kind of text precisely narrative text. The method of this research was qualitative. To find out the answer to the research question of this research, they occupied interviews and test as the instruments. There were twenty-six students as the respondents. From this research, the researchers obtained the students were lack of grammatical ability. Not only for their academic performance, but also because they felt low motivation, low confidence, and writing anxiety.

Furthermore, Sartika et al. (2022) examined to analyze the lists of students' problems in writing recount text. The descriptive qualitative was occupied as the research design of this research. In conducting this research, the researchers employed questionnaires and written tests as the instruments of the research. Meanwhile, in analyzing the data, this research used some procedures such as obtaining data, reducing data, displaying data, using content analysis, and drawing a conclusion. Finally, the findings of this research showed that the main difficulty felt by the students was applying grammar appropriately. It happened because they still in low knowledge of grammatical rule then less practice.

Indeed, motivation also has close relationship in academic performance. Focusing on writing skill, Aryanika (2016) studied correlation between motivation and writing skill. The purpose of this research was to find out the relation of motivation for writing academic performance. This research was quantitative research design. The subject of this research was the eleventh grader students. In

collecting the data, this research employed test and questionnaire. Meanwhile, in analyzing the data, this research implemented product moment. The result of this result showed that significantly motivation influenced the writing academic performance.

Dealing with the challenges of teaching writing, the researcher assumed asking about the strategies used by teachers to handle the writing class. A piece of the script interview needs to be shown as follows.

Researcher: "Let me know what is the strategy or method you used to teach writing skill to them, Ma'am?" (*Izinkan saya mengetahui apa strategi atau metode yang anda gunakan untuk mengajarkan kemampuan menulis kepada mereka Bu?*)

Teacher: "I used Grammar Translation Method. So far, it is the best method for teaching them." (*Saya menggunakan Grammar Translation Method, sejauh ini, ini adalah metode terbaik untuk mengajar mereka*)

The next finding as we can see in a piece of conversation above is the teacher's strategy in teaching writing skills. The researchers found the teacher used the Grammar Translation Method as the strategy. This method is usually called GTM. It is a method done by proving the translation of the target language. As Asl (2015) stated this method is a classical or traditional method that requires that students translate whole texts word for word and memorize numerous grammatical rules. So, the teacher provided the Indonesian meaning in teaching writing. The teacher translated some vocabulary to make the students understand what they meant.

In line with the research of Akramy et al. (2022), they found that the use of the GTM strategy in teaching writing that GTM was an important method of teaching because it assisted students learn grammatical rules properly that also important in writing. Another result of the research was that teachers oftenly would translate short passages, instructions, and any language items into L1 to assist students to learn about the target language using their L1. Those phenomena have achieved the goal of their

research namely for revealing the teachers' perception of occupying the GTM in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Moreover, this research depended on the answer of one hundred fifty participants. Then, it was accurate by employing Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) to analyze the data.

The GTM was also investigated by Durrani (2016). The main goal of this research was to discover the students' response toward employing the GTM context. In collecting the data, this research used a questionnaire. The data was analyzed by applying SPSS. As a result, the students voted positive responses in using GTM as the teaching method.

The positive impact of GTM was also supported by research conducted by Fereidone et al. (2018). This research examined the satisfaction level of students about implementation of GTM in the teaching and learning process. They collected the data by using a questionnaire as the instrument. There were thirty-five students. They used SPSS to examine the data. Finally, the result showed that the students had a positive response and were satisfied with the implementation of GTM in their class.

Next, the researchers also highlighted the important point from the teacher as follows.

Researcher: "Ma'am, how do you manage the class?" (*Bu, bagaimana upaya Anda dalam mengelola kelas?*)

Teacher: The class management also becomes my challenge too. It is because the total number of the students is 42 students. They are so crowded. Moreover, English class only scheduled twice a week. It needs additional time. (*Pengelolaan kelas menjadi tantangan juga untuk saya. Hal ini dikarenakan jumlah keseluruhan siswa adalah 42. Mereka sangat ramai. Apalagi, kelas Bahasa Inggris hanya dijadwalkan dua kali dalam seminggu. Dalam hal ini membutuhkan tambahan waktu.*)

Depending on the piece of the interview above we grab information that the next problem is the poor class management of the teacher. This is because the class contained so many students. There were 42 students and it

was crowded. Some students did not even pay attention to the learning process. Another problem is the limited time of teaching writing because English is taught only twice a week or four hours per week. Teaching writing needs a long time, while on the other hand, the teacher has to move on to the next chapter.

Related to the lack of management class of the English teacher, Septiyani et al. (2023) in their writing research suggest that English teacher need to enhance their teaching writing skill by following teaching workshop training or reading many books to develop their professionalism. Besides, Fatmah et al. (2022) conducted a writing research that showed the result that for improving the writing performance of the student, the teacher can occupy a Form-Focused Feedback method. It was proven in their research that this method affected assisted student writing accurately.

In short, by conducting this research the researchers obtain the overlap problems in one condition. Starting from their English performance, they lack in vocabulary, grammar, class management, time, and also their individual problems then all the cases relating each other. Then, based on several previous relevant studies, the result of this research also can be the reference for handling the writing class.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results, it can be concluded that the problems faced by English teachers in teaching writing are mostly because of students' lack of vocabulary and understanding of grammatical rules. To overcome those problems, the teacher applied the Grammar Translation Method. It is applied to give the students more vocabulary and provide explanations about grammatical rules. Hence, the teacher needs to use the other strategy considering the improvement quality of teaching and learning writing skill activities as looked at students' output. The strategies should be about the primary writing methods appropriate to the atmosphere of the students

and also the classroom. In teaching writing, the teacher's role is facilitator. As a facilitator, the teacher offers guidance in assisting students to engage the thinking process of writing. However, teaching writing is a very demanding task and there will be challenges for teachers. In fronting the challenges, suggests that teachers can use different strategies of teaching to achieve the teaching-learning goals. An appropriate and correct strategy might help the students along the process of writing. It can be said that in teaching writing, teaching strategies become a very important aspect of the teaching and learning process. Selecting the right strategy enables teachers and students to achieve their learning goals. In addition, the use of appropriate strategies can motivate students in the learning process of writing.

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