

# An Analysis of Students' Problems in Writing Descriptive Text

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse students' problems in writing descriptive texts. This research uses qualitative descriptive analysis. The population of this research is the 10th grade students of SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota in the 2022/2023 academic year, especially in class X Building Drawings. The sample was selected using a random cluster sampling technique, with only 1 class as the research sample. Data were collected using a written test, the results of the test were analysed using descriptive qualitative. The result of this study also showed that the students faced several problems in writing descriptive text. There were two kinds of problems found in students' writing; they were linguistic problems including grammar and vocabulary related problems, and non-linguistic problems which include organization of ideas, content and mechanical problems. The most frequently found problems in students' writing were related to grammar and mechanical. To overcome these problems, there are some suggested solutions which include using cooperative learning or rapid writing strategy in teaching writing descriptive text.

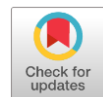
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## INTRODUCTION

Writing is the way to communicate with other people by using words. According to (Nordquist, 2019), writing is a system of graphic symbols that can be used to convey meaning. Writing is the action of composing a text. While according to Merriam Webster, there are some definitions of writing. First, writing is the act or process of one who writes. Second, writing is something written, such as; letters or characters that serve as visible signs of ideas, words, or symbols; a letter, note, or notice used to communicate or record; and written composition. Third, writing is a style or form of essay. And fourth, writing is the occupation of a writer, especially the profession of authorship.

Byrne in (Junaid, 2012) states that writing is more than the prediction of the sounds. The symbols have arranged according to specifications in the convention. As a rule, however, the students do not write just one sentence or several the sentence as arranged in particular order and linked together in specific ways. Widdowson, also in (Junaid, 2012), states that writing is a communicative activity and carried out by one specific general principle in which underlines the use of language in communication.

Some definitions are given by linguists about writing according to (A.Boardman & Frydenberg, 2008) define writing as a continuous process of thinking, organizing, rethinking, and recognizing. According to (Asilestari, 2018) writing is a process by drawing something based on writer background knowledge and organizes their knowledge into a good

paragraph. So, the students have to read a lot of books to get inspiration and write a lot to increase their capability.

For students, writing is usually thought to be the most difficult skill to acquire (Rianti, 2019). In fact, writing is more complicated than the other skills. It is because writing needs more aspects not only grammatical and vocabulary but more. It is as Lindstrom in (Westwood, 2006) said that writing is a complex skill involving multiple processes and abilities that problems can arise for some students. According to (Rianti, 2017) There is reason to suppose that the number of students with writing difficulties is even greater than the number experiencing difficulties in reading with understanding. It can be concluded that writing is complex activities that every students have different difficulties to do it. This skill is more difficult than the other skill.

Considering the definition above, the researcher concludes that writing is complicated activities which need of knowledge about what we are going to write. However, the students can learn writing by much practicing and reading a lot to get inspiration. The students hopefully can convey their ideas, feeling, and desires, and knowledge by writing.

### ***Definition of Descriptive Text***

There are twelve genres that are taught to senior high school students. Those are descriptive, recount, narrative, procedure, explanation, discussion, exposition, news item, information report, anecdote and review. The researcher focused on descriptive text which is taught in the second year of junior high school. Description writing vividly portrays a person, place, or things in such a way that the reader can visualize the topic and enter into the writers' experience. It is a way to enrich other forms of writing or as a dominant strategy for developing a picture of what something looks like.

Descriptive text is a kind of monolog text that describe the characterization of object with clear details to help readers visualize an object is being described. (Ghaith, 2018) state that descriptive writing portrays people, place, things, moment and theories with enough detail to help the writer create a mental picture of what is being written about. Just like other text types, descriptive text has a generic structure and language feature as well.

Writing is one of the skills required for a major in English Language. According to Brown in (Ramadani, 2013), writing is the other forms of spoken language that are represented graphically or symbolically. According to the Oxford Living Dictionaries, writing is a series of letters, words, or symbols written on a surface. All of the definitions combined lead to the conclusion that writing is the process by which people express their ideas or thoughts using language symbols or words. When writing something, people must have a goal in mind.

According to (Nation, 2009) Writing is an activity that can usefully be prepared for work in the other skills of listening, speaking and reading. This preparation can make it possible for words that have been used receptively to come into productive use. Writing is also considered as the indicator toward the student success in learning English. Since writing is productive skill, it also helps the students to develop their ability in expressing what they feel and think. Writing, speaking, and listening are communication skills that are important in all subject areas in the curriculum. This is because the students should be able to communicate in the target language in spoken and written language.

In classroom practice, most of students think that writing is problem. It is because in (Masrul, 2016) writing there are some important components such as vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Writing text is a challenge for students, especially for the tenth grade students of senior high school, who is learning about various kinds of text, writing descriptive text is one of it. The students need to pay more attention in detail object that is described with the correct grammar.

Descriptive text is a general text where it can be included to another text. According to (Husna et al., 2013) descriptive text is a kind of writing that consists of description

characteristics and definition of object or something. While, (Mardiyah et al., 2013) state that descriptive text has purpose to describe particular thing, people or place which show the reader about physical appearance of something clearly.

From the explanation above, the researcher chooses descriptive text because it can make students to explore their idea to describe something. Descriptive text is one of the functional texts which is difficult enough to be learnt by the students. Descriptive text is a text that gives information about particular person, place, or thing. In writing a descriptive text, students can use the simple present tense.

Mastering descriptive text helps the students to make another kind of text such like narrative text, recount text and report text. For example in narrative text when the students want to make the readers interested in it they must be able to make the text with a good detail, it demands the students to explain something in details. According to (Mardiyah et al., 2013) the generic structure of descriptive text are identification and description. In identification is identifies the subject to be described. The identification usually stated in the first paragraph to introduce the reader what the topic to be described in the next paragraph. In description, the writer explain about the subject in detail. It uses to support identification.

According to Sudarti & Grace in (yenita et al., 2014) there are several language future use in descriptive text, they are: Using simple present, simple present tense is the activity happen in daily life, and the habitual activity. However, sometimes it uses past tense if the thing to be described doesn't exist anymore. Use linking verb. Use adjective and compound adjectives and use of degree comparison.

There are still many students who are not able to write a descriptive text. (Nasser, 2018) states that the students may face many writing problems at different stages of their learning. According to (Novita, 2017) in her research, she state that the students showed that they have some problems in writing descriptive text. They are: 1) content; 2) organization; 3) vocabulary; 4) grammar; 5) Mechanics.

There are some problems that students face during writing the descriptive text. First, the problem in developing the ideas. It means that students cannot state the ideas clearly into the text because they are lack of information related to the topic. Second, the problem in organizing the ideas to write a descriptive text. A paragraph need more than a unified point; it needs a reasonable organization or sequence. The students have to organize their ideas into good paragraph or text. It means that the students have to make their writing readable. To write a descriptive text, the students can organize their ideas by identifying the topic and give the descriptions about the topic. Third, the students find difficulties in grammar.

Grammar difficulties will influence certain patterns of how words are put together to form the correct sentences. It will make the ideas can develop well. Fourth, the students are lack of vocabulary and they also have difficulties in developing their ideas related to the topic. Some students are still in doubt with choosing the correct words while composing descriptive text. Lack of vocabulary make the students confused in developing the ideas. In this case the students have to choose correct words that they need. The last difficulty is mechanic. It is related with spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

## METHOD

This study belongs to descriptive qualitative analysis in form of Qualitative Research about analyzing and describing the students' problems in writing descriptive text at the tenth grade of SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota in the academic year of 2022. By this qualitative research, the researcher sees the phenomenon of the research of the moment at the certain time. In this case, the researcher focuses on the students' problems in writing descriptive text at tenth grade of SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota.

### Respondents

The students at the "gambar bangunan class" of the tenth grade of SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota in academic year of 2022. There were consist 15 students.

### Instruments



To obtain the required data in order to answer the problems of this research, the test gave to the students. In this research, the writer collaborated with the English teacher to manage the class. The students were asked to write a descriptive text for 60 minutes. The text should be composed of at least three paragraphs. They were asked to describe about the place. The analysis was based on students appropriate in grammar, vocabulary, organization, mechanical and content. Furthermore, the data were explained by descriptive analysis.

### Data analysis

The following are the steps involved in data analysis: (1) the researcher collects data through writing test. The researcher then selects, identifies, and focuses on the data using the research problem formulation as a guide. (2) After selecting the information, the researcher organizes it into meaningful sentences. (3) The conclusion is reached after the data has been displayed.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

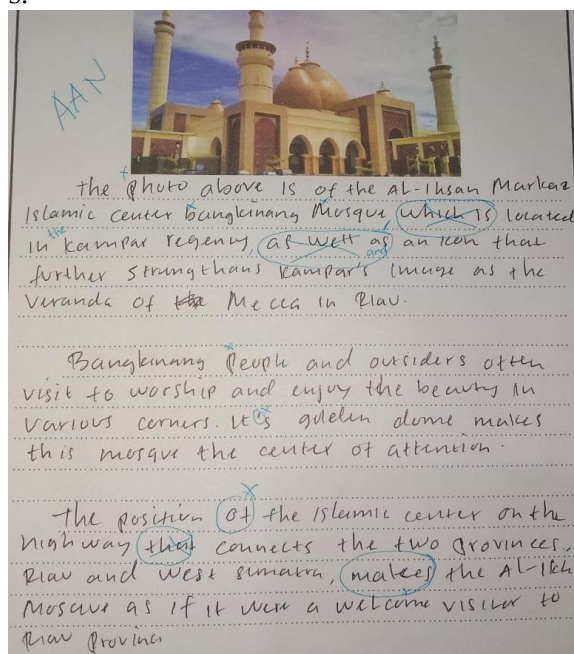
The writer presents findings and discussion that deal with writing descriptive text problems faced by the tenth-grade students of SMKN 1 Bangkinang Kota in the academic year 2022/2023 and the possible solutions to solve the problems in writing descriptive text faced by the students. The data gathered were analysed. In the analysis, the writer assessed the aspects of grammar, vocabulary, organization, content, and mechanical. This chapter also provides the result of students' problems in writing descriptive text gathered from the test.

### The Analysis of Students' Problem in Writing Descriptive Text

#### 1. Grammar

Grammar is the study of words, how they are used in sentences, and how they change in different situations. In this aspect, there were two main indicators the writer used to analyse the students' text they were simple present tense and agreement. In writing a descriptive text, the students should have good knowledge of grammar to make their writing good. The students still had considerable weaknesses in determining the verb and part of speech. Sometimes the students' sentences have no verb, and sometimes they put nouns before an adjective.

The student was supposed to write "making the Al-Ikhsan mosque as if it were a welcome visitor to Riau province," but she did not do that. Instead, she wrote the sentence verb with -s.

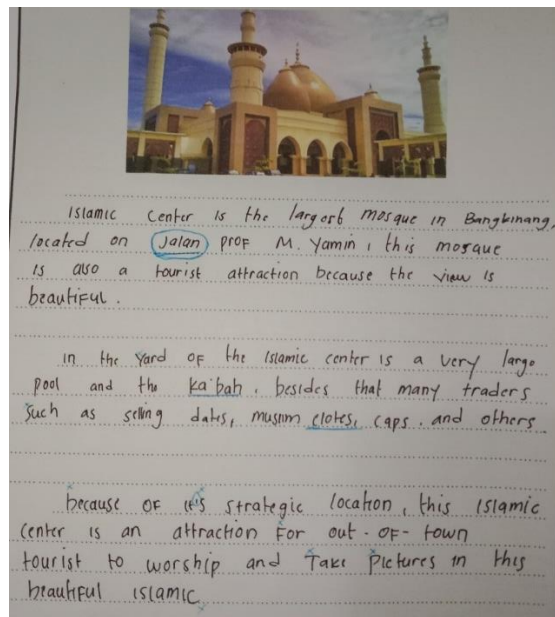


Picture 1. The Student' Grammar



## 2. Vocabulary

The second linguistic problem faced by the students in writing the descriptive text was vocabulary. Based on the students' descriptive text, the writer found that some students used the wrong vocabulary to describe a place. Most of the students were lacking in vocabulary, and they always found it difficult to develop their vocabulary; they could think in Indonesian, but they couldn't express what they thought in English. One of the students even uses Indonesian to describe a place, as shown in the picture of the students' text below.

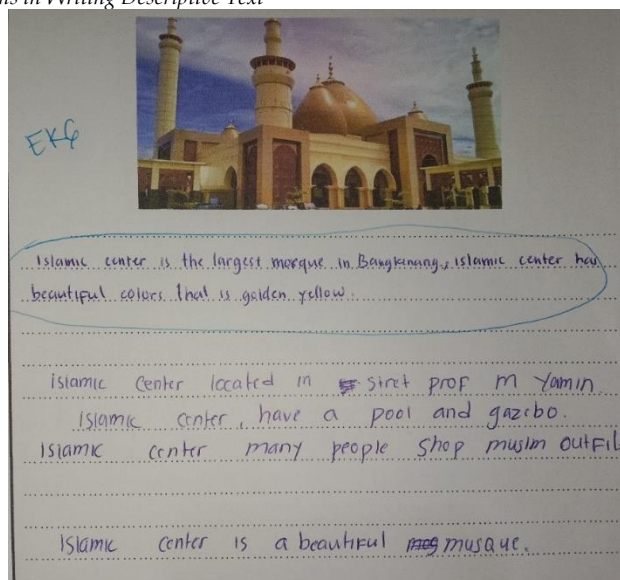


Picture 2. The Student' Vocabulary

In the students' writing text, the writer found that some of them did not know the English word "Jalan"; student DAP, in his text above, wrote: "located on Jalan Prof M. Yamin". We know from the students' texts that they still had a poor vocabulary, so that they couldn't write good texts.

## 3. Organization

Based on the students' texts, the writer found that some students still have problems organizing descriptive text. They did not know the generic structure of descriptive text theoretically, even though they can mention and explain identification and description. In fact, they still had weaknesses in practice. The students were still confused about different identification and description. It made them unable to develop their paragraphs. This is an example of students' writing text:



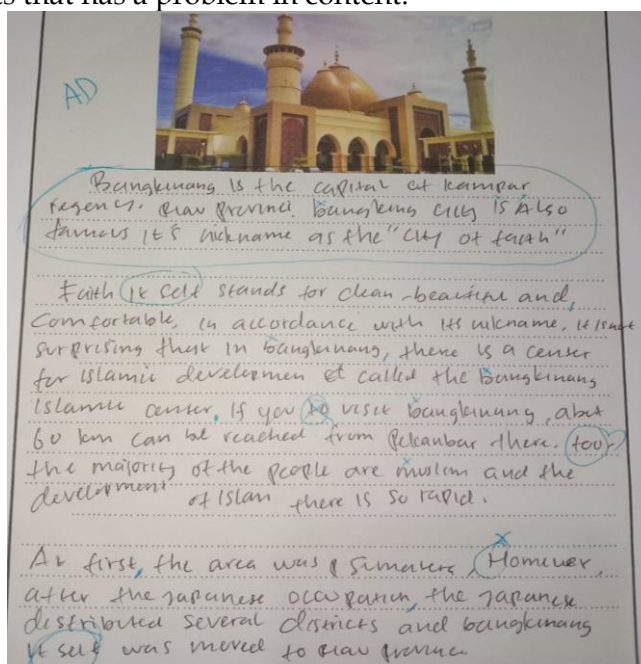
Picture 3. The student' Text Organization

From this text, it's known that some students did not write the identification completely like student EKG in her text above. The text was limited to what the object was and where is the place. It shows that the identification was not complete. The students should add more data about the thing to make identification complete.

On the other hand, one student wrote the descriptive text with only one paragraph. The student with the initials HA did not write completely in accordance with the generic structure of the descriptive text, such as identification and description. This indicates that there are still students lacking in the organization of descriptive texts.

#### 4. Content

As stated before, the content is related to sentences in the students' text to the object which the students should describe. Sometimes, the students had problems with content because they did not see the object they wanted to describe. Here the writer put one of the students' texts that has a problem in content.

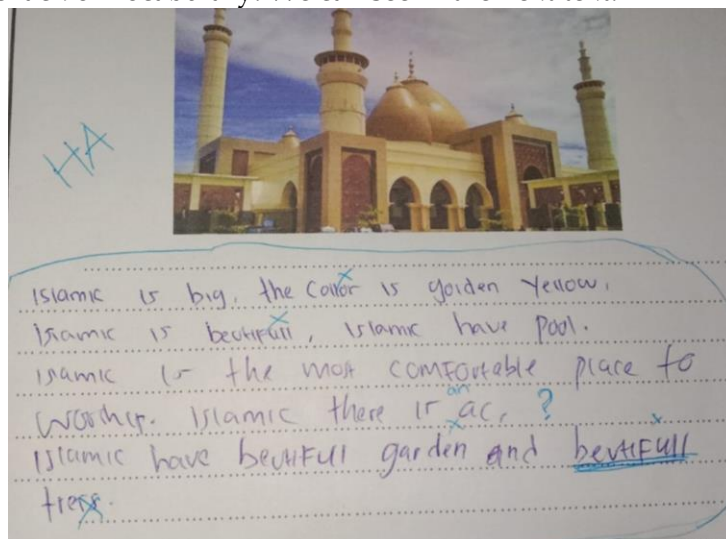


Picture 4. The Student' Writing Content

In this writing, the writer found students' mistakes in the content, such as AD students, he only wrote about where it is, he did not mention or write more about the special characteristics of the object. On the content aspect, the writer found that most of them only explained with minimal characteristics of the object they wanted to describe. Some students did not mention the special characteristics of the objects described by them. AD students do not describe the object clearly, but rather describe the location of the object.

#### 5. Mechanical

The last problem found in students' writing results was mechanics. The mechanical aspect is related to spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. The students have a lot of errors in spelling words. Sometimes they were confused to write the correct word because of the lack of vocabulary. We can see in the next text.



Picture 5. The Mechanical Writing

In the text, the writer found that some students were unable to write correct spelling like students HA, in his text above he wrote: 1) "the collar is golden yellow", 2) "Islamic is beautifull". The spelling word "collar" and "beautifull" is not correct, the correct spelling word are "color" and "beautiful". Another student did the same mistake as like student AP, on his text he wrote: "very worthy very worthy". He wrote the word repetition on his writing. Another problem usually found in students writing was capitalization. The students still made mistake in writing noun that should be started with a capital letter.

Based on the students' writing results, there were some students who uses the wrong capitalization like student IS, in her text above she wrote: "the Islamic center mosque is large". "the" were the proper nouns that should start with a capital letter, because it's in the first sentence. It shows that the students still had poor skills in writing a good text. On other hand, she wrote: "many people shop on the Islamic Terace There are many Islamic visits From out oF town." "Terace", "There", "From", and "oF" was the proper that should be lower case.

#### Discussion

After analyzing data on the research findings, it is necessary to describe and discuss the result of the research to explain in more detail the answer to the research questions. As mentioned in the first chapter, two research questions are, "What are the student's problems in writing the descriptive text?". The data collected through writing tests were used to determine the students' problems in writing descriptive text. To specify the students problem that the students made in writing descriptive text, the problems classified into five aspect of writing, namely organization, content, grammar, mechanics and vocabulary.

The result of the writing test can be shown that most of the students got problems in writing descriptive text because most of the students were lack of interest in learning English and practice to write the English text. It will affect their ability in writing. Moreover, most of the students also lack vocabulary and grammar. Whereas, both of them are the basic points in learning the English language. On the other hand, they were lack of knowledge about descriptive text clearly and which also make them got problems writing descriptive text.

From the students' answers, it can be seen that the cause of the students' difficulties in writing descriptive text is most of the student's lack of study and exercise to write or they feel so lazy to learn English because some students dislike this lesson or it can be said that they are lack of interest in learning English. Moreover in writing descriptive text. Besides that, the students lack vocabulary and grammar and which makes writing text be difficult. And some students still do not know the generic structure and language features of descriptive text.

From the data that has got by the researcher, the most cause of the students' problems is they are lack of study or practice. It can be said that they lack interest in learning English including writing the English text. And they have problems composing the sentences in English well because they still do not know about grammar. Moreover, they cannot develop ideas and translate them into English because they lack vocabulary. And sometimes they still do not know about the generic structures and language features of the text.

Based on the result of the document analysis, it can be concluded that the students' difficulties in writing are just in Linguistic difficulties. Byrne (1988) said that linguistic difficulty is the difficulty in using correct grammar and vocabulary. The writers face this problem because they are not mastering the grammar and vocabulary. And it makes them did many mistakes in writing text because they choose inappropriate grammar and vocabulary to their writing text. As (Alfaki, 2015) said that writing in a foreign language using appropriate words and grammar is a problem for the students.

According to the writing test, most of students got the difficulties because of they were lack of interest in learning and practice to write descriptive text because they thought that writing is the difficult lesson. And it will be affect to their writing ability become less. As (Hanafi, 2017) said that the most dominant cause of the students' difficulty is they are lack of interest in learning writing and it make the students think that learning writing is boring.

The next cause of the problems was students' lack of practice in writing descriptive text. Whereas, to make a good writing the students must take a lot of practice. Most of the students' lack of practice in writing text and it make them got problems in writing. It is supported by Hedge, he said that his own experience tells him that in order to become a good writer, a student needs to write a lot. Because of that, if students want to be more quality in writing they should take a lot of practice in writing.

The third cause was learner's prior knowledge. Most of the students still lack of knowledge about English. They were lack of vocabulary and grammar and it make them got difficulties in writing. They could not composed the sentence well and developed the ideas clearly in writing descriptive text. The different structure between Indonesian and English make students got confused when they wanted to transfer their ideas into written form. According to (Mashulah, 2013), he believed that the students' prior knowledge influences the students' ability in learning a foreign language. Students who had a lot of knowledge will be easier to learn the new lesson. So that, learning vocabulary and grammar is important because both of them are basic to make good writing.

## CONCLUSIONS

First, students' problems in the linguistic aspect include grammar and vocabulary. Based on the students' text, most of them have problems with grammar. Based on the students' writing results, the writer found that the students were confused about making correct grammatical words. The second problem in linguistic aspect is vocabulary. Based on the



students' texts, the writer found that one student still uses Indonesian in his descriptive text. This is due to a lack of vocabulary, so students cannot write texts well. The second problem found in students' writing results was the nonlinguistic problem. In the nonlinguistic aspect, the writer has found students' problems with content, organization, and mechanic. The students' texts there were some students who still had a problem organizing the descriptive text. Based on their writing results, most of them still made mistakes in mechanics, especially in spelling words. The students had a lot of errors in spelling words, and sometimes they were confused to writing the correct word phrase because of the lack of vocabulary.

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