
ANALYSIS OF WRITING SKILLS OF GRADE 10 STUDENTS AT BATIK 2 SURAKARTA HIGH SCHOOL ON ENGLISH DESCRIPTIVE TEXTS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the ability of tenth-grade students at SMA Batik 2 Surakarta in writing English descriptive texts using Heaton's framework. The study evaluates five aspects: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Using a descriptive quantitative method, students were given a descriptive writing test and assessed based on Heaton's rubric. The results show that most students fall into the Good to Average category across all indicators. However, grammar, organization, and mechanics remain the most challenging areas. Vocabulary and content are relatively well-mastered. These findings suggest the need for more structured instruction in grammar and writing conventions.

Keywords: *Descriptive writing, writing skill*

INTRODUCTION

Writing skills are the main means of expressing thoughts logically, systematically, and function as a tool for argumentation, conveying information, and documenting knowledge in writing. Writing serves as a means of expression, allowing learners to articulate their ideas and knowledge through written language. Through writing, learners can effectively structure their thoughts, transform them into coherent sentences, and present them in written form. Additionally, the process of writing enhances cognitive abilities by fostering critical thinking and intellectual engagement (A. D. Jayanti, 2019). To develop strong writing skills, consistent practice is essential, as it helps learners refine their ability to compose text with accuracy and clarity. Engaging in regular writing exercises can stimulate proficiency in constructing well-formed and meaningful texts. Rahmah (2017) emphasizes that the primary purpose of writing is to communicate the author's ideas to the reader. This view is supported by Pratiwi (2015), who asserts that writing fundamentally aims to convey information effectively. Writing acts as a bridge between the writer and the reader, enabling communication and knowledge transfer. When students possess insights or knowledge, they can utilize writing as a medium to express their perspectives. A proficient writer should be capable of effectively transmitting their ideas to the audience. Therefore, learners must ensure that their writing is clear and comprehensible, allowing readers to grasp the intended meaning without difficulty. Moreover, writing is a multifaceted skill that requires attention to several key elements, including grammar, spelling, clarity, and coherence.

Descriptive text serves the purpose of providing a detailed depiction of a specific person, place, or object. According to Suminar and Putri (2018), descriptive text is designed to present clear explanations about individuals, animals, objects, and locations, enabling readers to gain comprehensive information and a deeper understanding of the subject being

described. Consequently, readers can acquire insights into new objects introduced by the writer, who strives to illustrate them vividly and accurately. The primary objective of such explanations is to ensure that readers grasp the essence of the described object and enhance their knowledge through the text.

In addition, students should incorporate two main components when writing descriptive texts: identification and description. They need to fill in the text using these two essential elements. Moreover, it is crucial for students to pay attention to the language used in descriptive writing. The structure and language employed play a significant role in crafting effective descriptive texts. Occasionally, students encounter challenges in producing well-structured descriptive texts. Some may write descriptive pieces without adhering to the standards of effective writing in this genre. Therefore, it is essential to evaluate students' descriptive writing to enhance their skills, particularly in creating descriptive texts.

In this study, the researcher aims to assess students' abilities in writing descriptive texts. Additionally, this research intends to evaluate students' English descriptive writing based on Heaton's framework. The primary focus is to examine the students' performance on the English descriptive text test according to five specific indicators. The second aspect addresses the challenges students face when writing descriptive texts as outlined by Heaton's theory.

Writing is an activity that enhances students' vocabulary, grammar, and use of idioms. Hossain (2015) outlines various purposes of writing. It serves as a means for the writer to communicate with the reader and delve into a subject. The writer can convey their thoughts and emotions without the pressure associated with face-to-face interactions. On the other hand, Pratiwi (2015) asserts that writing is a multifaceted task. It requires a range of skills, such as generating ideas, organizing thoughts, selecting a topic, and translating those ideas into written language.

Animals, people, objects, locations, etc. are all described in descriptive texts. Urunami et al. (2017) bolster this claim by stating that descriptive texts provide information on a specific subject, such a written description of an object. In essence, it gives details on the fact, the topic, and their actions. A descriptive paragraph provides a clear and thorough explanation of an item, person, animal, thing, or location. In this instance, readers can picture the specified thing. As a result, the author will evoke their emotions and provide a vivid picture of the thing being described, and the reader will be able to see, experience, and have a general understanding of the subject matter.

Content in descriptive writing pertains to the topic selected by the writer for the text. In this regard, the writer must identify an appropriate subject to develop the text effectively. Additionally, the level of detail within the topic plays a crucial role in crafting a well-structured descriptive text. The writer should ensure that the text is thoroughly detailed and aligns with the chosen subject. According to Brown (2001), content accounts for 30% of the overall composition in English descriptive writing. Therefore, writers must give careful attention to the content to produce a coherent and informative descriptive text.

Good arrangement in descriptive writing is referred to as organization. This section includes the identification and description that make up the descriptive text's general structure. When writing a descriptive narrative, identification is crucial. It makes advantage of the generalization in the paragraph. It indicates that the student needs to name a specific item. In this instance, the student can recognize a topic that the book will discuss. The learner presents or identifies the subject during identification. It is the section of the paragraph that

includes the subject's introduction. The second section is a description, which includes a thorough justification of the topic being discussed.

According to Toago and Usman (2013), learners utilize the simple present tense while writing descriptive texts because it informs readers about the descriptions and employs the adjective to elucidate the noun. For example, a charming kitten, a good-looking man, stunning locations, etc. On the other hand, the action verb is employed to demonstrate the activity. The author should be proficient in the simple present tense as well as a few descriptive textual elements like walking, reading, sitting, etc. It is also simpler for students to convey their ideas in well-written form because of the descriptive text's excellent writing. Accordingly, students should study the subject, verbal, and nominal phrases that make up the simple present tense.

Johnson et al. (2013) discuss the vocabulary requirements for creating descriptive English texts in this section. According to him, the vocabulary should be chosen wisely to accurately utilize the term or words and effectively convey the subject. It indicates that the student should focus on selecting the appropriate word for the situation. When writing descriptively, using the incorrect word will result in a semantic error and make the content hard to grasp.

Heaton (1988) defines mechanics in writing as the writer's ability to construct text accurately by applying correct punctuation and spelling. Similarly, Afifuddin (2016) emphasizes that mechanics involve the proper use of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling to ensure clarity in written communication. Punctuation, as a linguistic tool, serves to structure and clarify text by distinguishing words, clauses, and phrases. Oshima and Hogue (2006) highlight the importance of punctuation, stating that its correct usage is essential for conveying meaning effectively. Additionally, spelling determines the visual representation of words, and errors in spelling can lead to incomprehensible text, making communication unclear.

An essential component of learning to write is taking writing tests. Understanding a student's writing proficiency may also demonstrate their ability to compose descriptive texts. The teacher gave students instructions to create descriptive texts and grade their writing tests to determine their level of writing skill. The application of Heaton's theory is one of the factors used to score English writing tests.

Heaton (1988) categorizes several components in the assessment of writing tests. These components include content, which encompasses the central ideas conveyed in writing. Additionally, organization pertains to the structuring of ideas, grammatical accuracy, and appropriate word choice. Lastly, mechanics involve the correct application of punctuation, spelling, and capitalization. Regarding the criteria for scoring, Heaton classified into four categorizations as follows:

Table 1.

| Score | Categorization of Scoring |
|--------------|----------------------------------|
| 3.51-4 | Very Good - Excellent |
| 2.51-3.50 | Average - Good |
| 1.51-2.50 | Poor - Fair |
| 1-1.50 | Very Poor - Poor |

METHOD

This research study used a descriptive quantitative research design. The purpose of this research study was to investigate the students' writing skills in descriptive text. This research study focused on analyzing the five English descriptive text test indicators by using Heaton's theory. The participants of this research study were the tenth grade one students of SMA Batik 2 Surakarta. With 35 students. The research instrument of this research was the English descriptive text test of the students. The researcher developed the instrument test from Brown and Abeywickrama (2010), consisting of five indicators: content, which consisted of topic and detail, an organization consisting of identification and description, grammar, which uses present tense and agreement, vocabulary, and mechanics. In this case, the students were asked to write an English descriptive text. Furthermore, the students' writing English descriptive text test was analyzed using Heaton's theory and writing testing scoring.

RESULTS

The findings of this study show how Heaton's theory evaluation is used to analyze descriptive English texts. Additionally, each category displays the five English descriptive text markers for pupils' writing abilities. Heaton's Theory was used to examine the descriptive text test results from the pupils. The researchers next looked at the content, structure, syntax, vocabulary, and mechanics of the English descriptive text as indications. The researchers next examined each indicator's issues with creating descriptive English texts.

In the content indicator, most students are in the "Good to Average" category at 43%. This is followed by the "Excellent to Very Good" category at 33%, which indicates that most students have a good mastery of content. However, there are still 13% who are classified as "Fair to Poor" and 10% "Very Poor", which indicates that a small number of students still need improvement in composing descriptive text content.

For the organization indicator, 44% of students were in the "Good to Average" category, which is the largest proportion in this aspect. Only 27% were classified as "Excellent to Very Good", while 23% fell into the "Fair to Poor" category, and 7% "Very Poor". This shows that although most students can organize the text well, many still need guidance in terms of writing structure.

On the grammar indicator, 37% of students fell into the "Good to Average" category, while 29% were in the "Excellent to Very Good" category. However, quite a few students were at a low level, with 23% in the "Fair to Poor" category and 11% in "Very Poor". This indicates that the grammar aspect is still a significant challenge for some students.

In the vocabulary aspect, the distribution of ability is quite even. A total of 33% of students showed "Excellent to Very Good" vocabulary skills, followed by 30% in the "Fair to Poor" category and another 30% in "Good to Average". The remaining 7% were in the "Very Poor" category. This shows a large variation in vocabulary acquisition among the students.

The last indicator, mechanics, showed that 27% of students were in the "Excellent to Very Good" category and 26% in "Good to Average". However, 23% were classified as "Fair to Poor" and 22% as "Very Poor". This data shows that the mechanical aspects of writing still require more attention for general improvement.

DISCUSSION

In the content indicator, the data shows that most students (43%) are in the Good to Average category. This shows that most students already have sufficient ability in compiling the

content of descriptive text, although not yet maximized. A total of 33% of students were classified as Excellent to Very Good, indicating that only some students were able to organize the content very well, conveying information clearly and in depth. Meanwhile, 13% were categorized as Fair to Poor and 10% Very Poor, indicating that there were still several students who had difficulty in conveying the main idea clearly and coherently. This indicates the need for assistance in understanding the content structure of descriptive text effectively.

In the organization indicator, it appears that 44% of students are in the Good to Average category, indicating that most students can organize paragraphs well, although not perfect. Only 27% were in the Excellent to Very Good category, indicating that there were still few students who really understood how to organize the text with a logical and coherent structure. Meanwhile, 23% were classified as Fair to Poor and 7% Very Poor, indicating difficulties in arranging sentences systematically and connecting parts of the paragraph. Grammar remains a major challenge, with many students struggling to apply correct tense and sentence structures. Errors in subject-verb agreement and incorrect use of adjectives and verbs were commonly observed.

The grammar indicator was one of the biggest challenges. Only 29% of students were able to use grammar very well. Most others (37%) were in the Good to Average category, and the rest consisted of 23% Fair to Poor and 11% Very Poor. This indicates that many students still make mistakes in the use of sentence structures, tenses, and other grammatical rules, which can affect the clarity of meaning in the text. These findings are consistent with previous studies that emphasize grammar and mechanics as weak points in student writing (Afifuddin, 2016; Toago & Usman, 2013).

Meanwhile, in the vocabulary indicator, the distribution of students' abilities is quite even. As many as 33% of students showed excellent vocabulary mastery, while 30% fell into the Good to Average category, and another 30% were Fair to Poor. Only 7% were classified as Very Poor. This indicates that vocabulary is not a major problem for most students, although some still need to expand their vocabulary to make their descriptive texts more varied and expressive.

Finally, mechanics indicators such as spelling and punctuation also show that many students have not achieved optimal ability. Only 27% were classified as very good and 26% as fair. A total of 23% and 22% of students were categorized as Fair to Poor and Very Poor, respectively, which shows that there are still many basic errors in writing that need to be corrected, such as the use of capital letters, punctuation, and correct word writing.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the five indicators of descriptive text writing skills (content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics), it can be concluded that most students are in the Good to Average category. This shows that their writing skills are good enough, but not yet optimal. The indicators of grammar, organization, and mechanics are the aspects that present the most challenges, as seen from the high percentage of students who are still in the Fair to Poor and Very Poor categories. On the other hand, the vocabulary aspect shows relatively better results, indicating that vocabulary mastery is not the main obstacle in writing descriptive texts.

To improve the overall quality of students' writing, it is recommended that teachers focus more on teaching grammar, text organization, and writing mechanics. Approaches that can be implemented include structured writing exercises, the use of clear assessment rubrics,

and the provision of individualized feedback. In addition, the integration of project-based learning and the use of good model texts can help students understand and replicate the structure and style of effective descriptive writing. Peer review activities can also be implemented to encourage evaluation among students, making the learning process more interactive and reflective.

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