

AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL IN DESCRIPTIVE TEXT AT GRADE X1 IPA 1 OF MAN 2 PADANG

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini terdiri dari masalah, tujuan penelitian, metode, temuan penelitian dan kesimpulan. Penelitian ini terfokus kepada kemampuan siswa dalam menulis teks deskriptif. Teks deskriptif termasuk kedalam jenis teks yang tidak terlalu sulit namun masih ditemukan beberapa kesulitan yang dihadapi siswa saat menulis karangan ini, inilah yang melatar belakangi peneliti melakukan penelitian ini. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisa kemampuan siswa dalam menulis teks deskriptif. Dalam mengumpulkan data, peneliti menggunakan tes menulis sebagai instrumennya. Penelitian ini merupakan sebuah penelitian deskriptif kuantitatif. Komponen-komponen yang dianalisis adalah pengembangan ide, pengorganisasian ide, tata bahasa, kosa kata dan tanda baca. Peneliti menganalisis kemampuan menulis siswa berdasarkan lima kategori: sangat bagus, bagus, cukup, lemah, kurang dan sangat kurang. Penelitian ini dilakukan di MAN 2 Padang kelas XI IPA1. Hasil penelitian ini menggambarkan bahwa siswa menghadapi kesulitan dalam mengorganisir dan mengembangkan ide. Mereka tidak mampu mengembangkan ide pada teks yang mereka tulis. Sedangkan pada komponen grammar tidak ditemukan kesulitan yang mendasar. Pada komponen kosa kata juga masih ditemukan beberapa kesulitan dalam mengaplikasikan kosa kata bahasa inggris yang baik dan masih menggunakan kosa kata bahasa indonesia. Untuk komponen tanda baca juga tidak ditemukan kesalahan yang begitu berarti. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian ini guru disarankan untuk lebih memperhatikan pengajaran struktur teks deskriptif dalam pengembangan ide, pengaturan ide, grammar, kosa kata dan mekanik. Guru juga diharapkan lebih banyak memberikan contoh dan latihan mengenai deskriptif teks kepada siswa sehingga tercapai tujuan pendidikan dengan baik, khususnya mata pelajaran bahasa inggris

Kata Kunci: *Students' Writing Skill, Descriptive Text*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is usually regarded as the most difficult skill to learn, not only because of the needs to master many skills of English; reading, speaking, and listening, but also because of the difference between the learners' native language rules and that of the language being learned. Based on the Senior High School Competency

Based Curriculum, the students are expected to be able to communicate in English both in oral and written form. In senior high school in Indonesia, the skill of writing is taught by using genre based approach. Students are introduced to some genres and taught through the model of reading texts where they

are explicitly taught about the social function, the generic structures, and the language features of the genres. By introducing them to the reading model texts, they are expected to know and understand the difference between one genre to another in English, so that they are able to write the genres by themselves with the right order of generic structures and the correct use of the language features of genres.

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 high school. As stated above, the descriptive text is taught by introducing the students to the model text with a hope that they will be able to write the genre well.

A descriptive text is a text which a writer tries to picture what he is describing. Description is used to describe a particular thing/object, place, or person. The descriptive text is really different from the other kinds of text. Descriptive text is the text that describes something. Wyrick (1987:227) states, "The writer of description creates a word-picture of persons, places, objects, and emotions using a careful selection of detail to make an impression on the reader." From the explanation above, it can be concluded that descriptive writing is a kind of writing that consists of description, characteristics, definition of something, object or person. Then, the descriptive text is usually in simple present tense. It is necessary for the teacher to make teaching and

learning writing descriptive text more interesting.

In this research, the students wrote about a place. The students should include several informations about the place, such as where the place is, how big it is, how cold or warm the place is, how the place makes you feel, what things you can see in this place, etc. For example, when a student wants to describe about his house, then he should have background knowledge about parts of his house, such as how many rooms that this student has?, what is the color of the wall?, how wide or how high the house is.

The researcher is interested to analyze and focus on students' difficulties in writing descriptive text such as developing their ideas, organizing ideas, grammar, mechanics and using vocabulary appropriately. There are two generic structures of descriptive writing: identification and description. Identification is a part of text where the students could identify the phenomenon while description is the part where the students are able to describe parts, qualities and characteristics.

In writing a descriptive text, the students often found some difficulties although they have been guided by their teachers to write it. There were some difficulties that students face during writing the descriptive paragraph. First, the problem in developing the ideas. Some students wrote many main ideas in one paragraph; the idea of the paragraph was still ambiguous. Sometimes, it is also found that some paragraphs were written in one sentence only. The idea of the

paragraph was still not clear. Second, the problem in organizing the ideas to write a descriptive text. A paragraph needs more than a unified point; it needs a reasonable organization or sequence. The students have to organize their ideas into good paragraphs; the students have to make their writing readable. To write a descriptive paragraph, the students can organize their ideas by identifying the topic and give the descriptions about the topic.

Third, the students found 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 do develop well. Fourth, when students proceed writing something, many problems could be found. Some students are lack of vocabularies and they also have difficulties in developing their ideas related to their topic.

Some students were still in doubt with choosing the correct words while composing descriptive text. Lack of vocabularies made the students confused in developing their ideas. In this case the students have to choose correct words that they need. The Fifth difficulty was students' related with spelling, punctuation and capitalization.

Based on this phenomenon, it can be concluded that students made some mistakes in mechanic aspect. Spelling, punctuation and capitalization difficulties can also affect the meaning of the sentences in a paragraph; they made the reader confused on the contiguity meaning of the sentences even of the paragraph. Unfortunately, many

students were not interested in writing about something, even though it is about their life. They prefer reading and speaking to writing. As stated before, writing is more difficult than others skill since it needs more aspects. It involves many different elements such as grammar, vocabulary, organization of ideas, spelling, and punctuation marks.

Writing becomes the most difficult skill when it is learned by the foreign language learners. "Writing is a difficult skill for native speakers and non-native speakers; because writers must be able write it in multiple issues such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabularies and mechanics such as punctuation, spelling, and capitalization" (Rass, 2001:30). According to Brown (2001): "writing is thinking process, because writing is a process of putting ideas down on paper to transform thought into words and give them structure and coherent organization". Hugley et al (1983:3) explain that "writing is a communicative act. It depends upon the awareness of the social expectation". This means as communicative act, writing can develop social relationship and social expectation because writing is one of the tools in communication.

Furthermore, writing is an essential aspect of interaction on language teaching beside reading and speaking. The students learn it, because it can be used to practice grammatical rules. Harris (1997:38) states that "the students can use writing to express their ideas, opinions, realities, and point of view. People can communicate a variety of

messages known readers or unknown readers by writing.

Such communication is extremely important in the modern world, whether the interaction takes the form of most technologically advanced electronic mail. In conclusion, writing is a communicative activity that needs to be encouraged nurtured during the language learners' course of study.

Related to the explanation above, Myles (2002:1) said:

the ability to write well is not a naturally acquired skill; it is usually learned or culturally transmitted as a set of practices in formal instructional settings or other environments. Writing skills must be practiced and learned through experience

Based on the ideas above, the researcher concludes that writing is a thinking process, a transaction with words followed by a physical act. It requires practice to communicate and make contacts from the writer to the reader. In this writing activity the writer follows the rules of grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentence structure.

Knapp and Watkins (2005:95) state "the genres of describing are one of the fundamental functions of any language system and one of the first skills emergent language users learn to control". They also state that "descriptions enable the categorisation or classification of an almost infinite range of experiences, observations and interaction into a system that orders them either objectively or subjectively,

depending on the learning area or intent of the writer".

Based on the national curriculum KTSP (School Based Curriculum) 2006, the aim in teaching writing at senior high school is that the students are able to write a simple descriptive text. The skill to write descriptive text is taught at the first year. Sudarwati and Eudia (2007:113-137) state that "the targets of teaching writing descriptive text for the first year students of senior high school are (1) the students are able to describe animals and people, (2) the students are able to describe their school, (3) the students are able to describe places".

They also propose the characteristics of a descriptive text, the first is Using specific words to state the controlling the idea. Second, limiting the description of a place in terms of time of day and season of the year. Get the subject into focus before starting describing. Third, choose the word carefully; using the words and phrase that convey sharp descriptive images with many kinds of words, not just adjectives. Fourth, describing a person not by simply compiling a list of his or her physical appearances; clarifying the central impression of the reason and then developing the central impression with clear descriptive details. Fifth, do not really just a few descriptive details to convey the central impression. Sixth, do not be confused of objective description with subject description. In objective description, the object being described becomes more important than perception of the object.

Descriptive text usually has own specific features as follows: first,

make use of adjectives and adverbs. Second, Use comparison to help picture it-something is like something. Third, Employ students' five sense- how it feels, smells, looks, sounds and tastes. (Taken from Modul Bahasa Inggris 2008)

Based on the definitions above, it can be concluded that descriptive text is the text that describes something in order the readers or listeners are able to get the same sense as what the writer experienced with his/her six senses: looks, smells, feels, acts, tastes, and sounds. It helps another to understand your experience.

The description of place is bringing the student into the situation where they have been there. According to Knapp and Watkins (2005) "a description of place can include physical and emotional description. A description of place sometimes includes descriptions of objects and/or people that may be associated with the place". It means that by giving complete information about the place it more interesting by including details that express feelings about this special place. Furthermore, the students have been given some questions to help them write effectively: "what do you think about the place?", "How is the interior and exterior design?", " What did you like about it?", etc.

The generic structure of the descriptive text is different from other texts. There are two main components in the generic structure of descriptive text. They are identification and description.

Gerot and Peter (1994:208) mention that "there are two

components in the descriptive text: first, identification; identifies phenomenon to be described, and description; describes parts, qualities, and characteristics". The identification usually occurs in the first paragraph and the description stated in the continuing paragraph. The description consists of three parts: the parts of the place, the quality of the place and the characteristic of the place.

Sudarwati and Eudia (2005:27) mention that "there are two components of the generic structure of descriptive text. They are identification; identify phenomenon to be described and description; describes parts, qualities, and characteristics". They add that "the language features for descriptive text are focus on specific participants, use of attributive and identifying process, frequently use classifiers in nominal groups, and use of Simple present tense".

Good organization helps the reader better understand the ideas presented. The descriptive writing is organized according to how the person, place, or object exists in the real world. For example, a description of house might begin with the outside, then move to the inside, and proceed from room to room. Knapp and Watkins (2005: 80) said that "organizing writing according to parts of the whole helps a reader to better visualize the items being described".

The components of writing descriptive are developing ideas, organizing ideas, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics derived as the indicators in scoring students'

writing. For detail, it can be seen on the appendix 1.

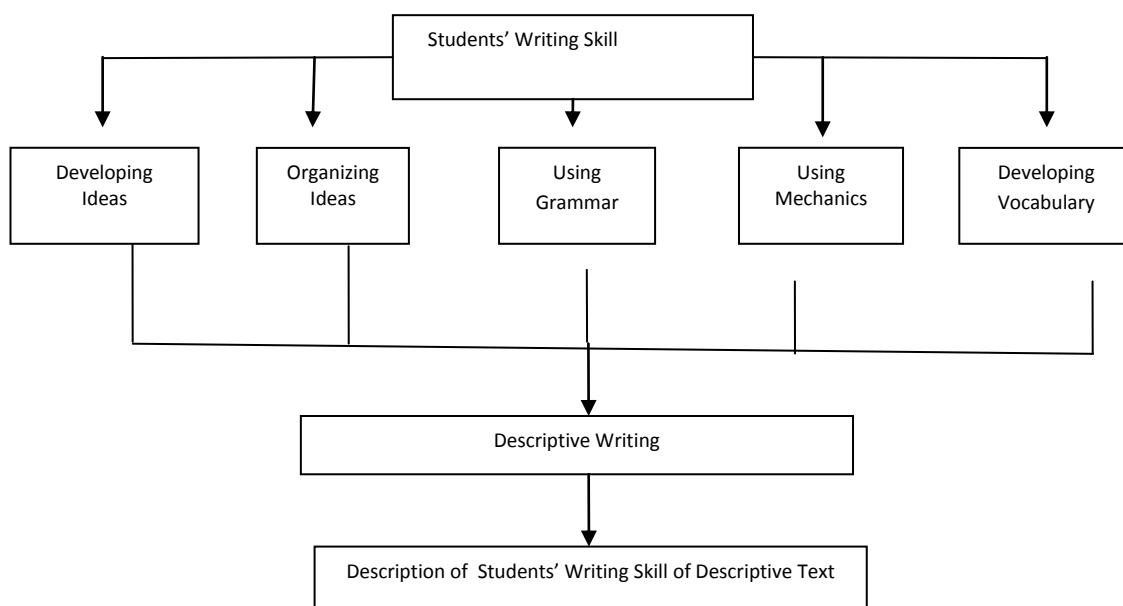
From the indicators above, it lead to the data description and able indicator helps the researcher and the scorers to score the students' test. From those indicators, the researcher can see the students skill through their test and analyze it based on the indicators.

According to Brown (2001) "writing is thinking process, because writing is a process of putting ideas down on paper to transform thought into words and give them structure and coherent organization". In this

to answer the research questions. This

case, students doing the thinking process through descriptive writing.

Descriptive text is a kind of writing that consists of description, characteristics, definition of something, object or something. Descriptive writing also involves putting across feelings, describing place, things and object. In this case the researcher is going to describe the students' skill in writing descriptive text based on their writing test result.



Descriptive text is the text that describes something in order the readers or listener are able to get the same sense as what the writer experienced with his or her six senses: looks, smells, feels, acts, tastes, and sounds. In this case the topic of the writing text is about the place. In writing descriptive text the students have to fulfill the five components of writing, they are

developing ideas, organizing ideas, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics

Developing ideas is the most important thing to the students in writing descriptive text. By developing the ideas, the students can make a good writing text and develop their ideas clearly in each paragraph. In organizing ideas, students have to identify the name of

place and describe the detail of the place in the supporting paragraph. In writing descriptive text the students have to use an appropriate grammar, in this case simple present tense. In composing the text, students have to choose the appropriate and accurate words to express the ideas. In mechanics component, students have to use the good punctuation, spelling and capitalization. By analyzing the five components of the students' descriptive text, the researcher can see the students' skill in writing descriptive text.

1. Developing Ideas

The topics that were given to the students were considered familiar to the students. However, in this research there were some students who unable develop their ideas well. It might be because they do not understand how to develop the ideas. The students said that they had studied how to make a good descriptive writing text. However, in practice, they did not succeed in composing a good descriptive text. The first problem is dealing with developing ideas. They confessed that they familiar with the topic, i.e the place. They already wrote the object, but in their writing there were only a small number of ideas presented. They were able to compose a good topic sentence. However, they were unable to develop it into a good paragraph. it also found that some students were not has a paragraph unity, according to Barnet and Stubbs (1990:105) "A good paragraph has unity (it makes one point, or it indicates where one unit of the

topic begins and ends)". To have a paragraph unity a student has to support the ideas into the sentences. For example in the first test found some uninformative text. So, the readers did not catch the idea of the writing text. The students admitted that this problems was due to the difficulties of transforming the ideas from the mind into written text.

2. Organizing ideas

Based on the findings, the students faced difficulties in organizing the ideas because they do not know how to deliver it in English. Many of the students failed to organize the text well. It was related to the use of coherence of descriptive writing. They must compose the writing by applying the correct coherences, so the students can bring the real situation to the writing works. Reep (2009:82) states that "a paragraph achieves coherence when the sentences proceed in a sequence that supports one point at a time. Transitional, or connecting, words and phrases facilitate coherence by showing the relationship between ideas and by creating a smooth flow of sentences". In organizing the ideas the students have to use two components of generic structure of writing descriptive, they are identification and description.

Gerot and Peter (1994:208) mention that "there are two components in the descriptive text, (1) identification; identifies phenomenon to be described, and (2) description; describes parts, qualities, and characteristics". In

identification component, the student has to identify phenomenon to be described. It means that, in description component, the student has to describe parts, qualities and characteristics of the objects. After analyzing the organizing ideas components, it was found that there are so many students faced difficulties organized the text well. First, they were able to identify the place. They were able to mention the object, place, the name and the location. However, they could not mention the location only; they have to give the related information about the object. Second, after identifying the place the student has to organize it by describing parts, qualities and the complete features from the object itself in order to inform the reader. Unfortunately, they were unable to describe the place well. Sometimes, the students cannot organize the paragraph well, it seems that they cannot develop the ideas of their writing well. Beside identification and description component, in organizing ideas the students also have to pay attention to the chronological order to their text. Chronological order is ordered by time; it uses to explain the process, for example where is Yos Sudarso hospital located? The students can use: first, second, next, etc to explain about the future of the places. Chronological order also used to describe events period of time. In fact, only small numbers of the students used chronological order. The students confessed that these occurred because they

did not write the outline before write the text and did not a list of ideas first. They directly wrote the ideas coming to their mind. So, it makes their text did not organized well and many repetition of ideas presented.

3. Vocabulary

Many of the students had poor choice of words. The ideas of the students were too general. It might be because the students did not know many vocabularies in English, lack of practices and faced difficulties in learning English. Stahl (2005) says that “vocabulary is the knowledge of words and word meanings and also puts vocabulary knowledge as the knowledge of a word not only implies a definition, but also implies how that word fits into the context”. Unfortunately, few of students put the words which were contextually unsuitable. It makes the reader should re-read the text in order to comprehend the idea. Even, the students also use some Indonesian language if they did not know how to say the words in English. It means that the students have to enrich their vocabularies. The Students only got the vocabulary input when the teacher explains the material jot down for them.

4. Grammar

There were only few mistakes found in grammar component. It might be caused by the frequent occurrence of simple present in descriptive text.

5. Mechanics

Meanwhile, the student did not have difficulties of putting punctuation and capitalization.

But sometimes they misspelled because different between the pronunciation and written form of a word. It was reflected in their writing text. They only had a few error mechanics.

METHOD

This research is descriptive quantitative research. The purpose of the research is to gain information about phenomena in order to describe existed condition in the field. Gay (2005:208) states that “descriptive quantitative research involves collecting numerical data to test hypotheses or answer questions concerning current status conducted either through self-reports collected through questionnaires or interviews or through observation”. Then Gay and Airasian (2000:11) state that “quantitative approaches are used to describe current conditions, investigate relationships, and study cause-effect phenomena”. Quantitative descriptive or survey research involves collecting data in order to answer questions about the current status of the subject or topic of study and obtain information about preferences, attitudes, practices, concerns or interest of some group of people.

In this study the researcher analyzed the students’ difficulties in composing descriptive text. Then the researcher examined the problems that they face. This research contained deep and reaches description and it was more concerned with process than specifying outcome or product. Then the data were analyzed inductively to provide meaning, where the researcher worked to collect data and to find the relevant information and get the conclusion (Syah Nur 2006).

This research was conducted at grade XI the students of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Padang. At grade XI, one class consists of 40 students, there were 9 classes which study English in the second year. These 9 classes were handled by three teachers, and each teacher taught three classes.

The data were collected the writing test. The topic of the test was about the place, such as *House, School, Mosque, Plaza*, etc. The topic was chosen by the students about the place that they were interested in. The teachers gave the students 90 minutes to write their descriptive writing text of about 200 words. According to the curriculum, the students were expected to write 350 words. From the teacher’s information about the students ability in writing descriptive text, they only produced about 200 words. According to Weir (1993:97) “each task of each student should be scored independently (as many scores as possible should be involved in the same assessment of each students’ work)”.

The participans of this research were the second grade students of MAN 2 Padang. They wrote descriptive text in their writing activities. In this case they focused in using the correct grammar, mechanics, vocabulary and develop their ideas into a good text.

Quantitative method was used to analyze the students’ writing test. The aspects which were: developing ideas, organizing ideas, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics were scored by the people who competent in scoring the test. The students’ tests were scored by people who have good competencies in writing, such as lecturers of English.

DISCUSSIONS

The students' scores in writing descriptive text were presented in the following descriptions:

Table 1. Students' total scores for each component of writing descriptive text.

No	Category	Developing Ideas		Organizing Ideas		Grammar		Vocabulary		Mechanics	
1	Excellent					4	14.2%			3	10.7%
2	Good	8	28.5%	10	35.7%	2	7.1%	9	32.1%	2	7.1%
3	Satisfactory	13	46.4%	12	42.8%	21	75%	15	53.5%	15	53.5%
4	Weak	7	25%	6	21.4%	1	3.5%	4	14.2%	8	28.5%
5	Poor										
		28	100%	28	100%	28	100%	28	100%	28	100%

Table 2. presents the students' scores for each component of descriptive writing. It can be said that none of students get poor score for each component. However, none of the student got excellent for vocabulary, developing ideas, and organizing ideas component. On the other hand there were 10.7% students who got excellent for Mechanic component and 14,2% students for grammar component. For good category, there were 35.7% students who got good for organizing ideas, 28.5% for developing ideas, 32.1% for Vocabulary, 7.1% for Grammar and & 1% for mechanics component. For satisfactory category, there were 42.8% of students for organizing idea, 46.4% for developing idea, 53.5% for vocabulary, 5% for

grammar and 53.5% for mechanic component. On the other hand, for weak category, there are 21.4% for organizing idea, 25% for developing idea, 14.2% for vocabulary, 3.5% for grammar and 20.5% for mechanic component. From the explanation above, it shows that the students' scores for each component analyzed in students' descriptive writing. Most of the students got satisfactory for organizing idea, developing idea, vocabulary, grammar and mechanic. It means that the students ability of those four components were satisfactory.

In the second test, the students still composed a descriptive text with the same topic about the place. The students were not allowed to write

the same title as the first test. Before the writing activity began, the researcher reminded the student about the component and the theory of writing descriptive text. They were not allowed to take their test home. The researcher provided the Table 2

Students score for each component.

No	Category	Organizing Ideas		Developing Ideas		Vocabulary		Grammar		Mechanics	
1	Excellent	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	2	7.1%
2	Good	11	39.2%	12	42.8%	13	46.5%	5	17.8%	6	21.4%
3	Satisfactory	9	32.1%	8	28.5%	15	53.5%	16	57.1%	18	64.2%
4	Weak	8	28.5%	8	28.5%	-	-	6	21.4%	2	7.1%
5	Poor	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%
		28	100%	28	100%	28	100%	28	100%	28	100%

Table 2. present the students' score for each component of the descriptive text. It can be seen that only one of the students got excellent for mechanic component. There are 42.8% of the students got good score for developing ideas, 39.2% students got good for organizing ideas. For vocabulary component there are 46.4% students got good score and there are 64.2% of the students got satisfactory for grammar component.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on findings, it can be concluded that the quality of the students test is satisfactory. The students still have problem in composing the text.

time for writing descriptive text was about 90 minutes and composes a text within 200 words.

The students' scores in writing descriptive text were presented in the following descriptions.

- (1) The students are still unable to transfer and develop their idea into a written form well in composing a text.
- (2) The students fail to show well-organized writing. They do not use identification and description process on writing appropriately. They do not follow the order of writing process. They do not write a list of their ideas; they just directly wrote what they thought without planning.
- (3) The students have insufficient vocabularies. They put the words which were unsuitable contextually.

- (4) The students applied correct grammar, in this case is simple present tense.
- (5) Meanwhile, they are able to put mechanics; punctuation, spelling and capitalization in their writing well.

It occurred not only because of the students' were not succeed in following the order of writing process but also because of less effort. They rarely practice writing and a good text in and out classroom. They already know the rules of writing but still unable to apply it. Those problems make their writing skill is still weak.

IMPLICATIONS

The result of the research has deal with the students' skill of descriptive writing. First, these findings imply the teachers should use an effective strategy in teaching descriptive writing in order to get good results for the students. Second, the topic which close to the students writing: students has a good background about the place, imply the good result for their writing descriptive writing. Third, students who get weak and poor category implies that their writing are not good, because their difficult to develop and organize the idea well. Fourth, the teacher must be give the students chance to practice their writing skill, especially for descriptive text.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion of the research, the researcher would like to give some suggestions as to follows:

1. It is suggested that the teacher to help the students to compose good texts by giving various ways to develop their ideas and organizing ideas.
2. It is suggested that the teacher provide time to the student for practicing their writing skill; in this case the teacher has to teach the student how to organize the ideas well.
3. It is suggested that the teacher brainstorm the ideas and make an outline before come to writing activities. Outline will help the student to organize and develop their ideas well.
4. For other researcher who will conduct further research about descriptive writing can analyze more about this skill.

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APPENDIX

Appendix

1

Indicators of Descriptive text

The Content	Indicator	Sub-Indicator
1. Developing Ideas	1. Paragraph Unity 2. Coherence	a. topic. b. topic sentence. c. supporting sentence. d. concluding sentence a. the sentence hold together b. understandable
2. Organizing Ideas	1. Coherences 2. Identification 3. Description	a. repeat key words from sentence to sentence., b. use pronoun for preceding key term. c. use demonstrative adjective. d. use connecting words a. identify the name of place and location. b. describe the complete features of the place Parts, Qualities and Characteristics

3. Grammar	<p>1. Simple Present tense</p> <p>2. Relational verbs</p> <p>3. Adjective words</p>	<p>a. to describe actions or conditions that are usual, habitual or permanent.</p> <p>b. to state general / truth, c. for future action on schedule time., d. for future action in certain time</p> <p>relational verbs used when classifying and describing appearances/qualities and parts/functions of phenomena (is, are, has, have)</p> <p>used to add extra information to nouns and may be technical, everyday or literally, depending on the text.</p>
4. Vocabulary	<p>1. Word choices</p> <p>2. Amount of Vocabulary</p>	<p>Choose the appropriate and accurate words to express ideas.</p> <p>200 words</p>
5. Mechanics	<p>1. Punctuation</p> <p>2. Capitalization</p> <p>3. Spelling</p>	<p>a. comma, b. Period, c. the colon, d. Semicolon, e. Apostrophe, f. Quotation marks, g. the dash</p> <p>a. capitalize the first word in sentence</p> <p>b. capitalize pronoun I, c. capitalize the titles of composition, d. capitalize the proper noun, e. capitalize name of detail, title, month, day, specific group or people, geographic areas, and specific structures.</p> <p>Avoid misspelling</p>