AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' ABILITY AND PROBLEMS IN WRITING RECOUNT TEXTS AT GRADE VIII OF SMPN 29 PADANG

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk melihat kemampuan siswa dalam menulis sebuah teks *recount* dan masalah-masalah yang dihadapi siswa dalam menulis teks *recount* tersebut. Sampel penelitian ini adalah siswa kelas VIII SMPN 29 Padang. Penelitian ini termasuk dalam *descriptive study*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa kelas VIII 5 SMPN 29 Padang memiliki kemampuan menulis teks *recount* pada level menengah. Hal ini bisa dilihat dari hasil tes menulis siswa, lebih dari 50% siswa memperoleh nilai di bawah 60. Sedangkan untuk melihat masalah yang dihadapi siswa dalam menulis, peneliti menggunakan hasil tes yang di analisis berdasarkan aspek-aspek menulis yaitu; *content, organization, vocabulary, grammar,* dan *mechanics.* Selain itu, peneliti juga menggunakan angket yang dibagikan kepada siswa. Rata-rata siswa mengalami masalah pada penguasaan *grammar* dan *vocabulary.*

Keywords: writing ability, writing problems, recount text

A. Introduction

Writing as the productive skill is considered more difficult than another productive skill. Knapp and Watkins (2005: 15) state that although speaking and writing are both form of communication that use language as the medium, they are actually slightly different.

Speaking is first and foremost a time-based medium. Speaking is interaction between people, in time, where they can exchange information and be able to ask for clarification. Writing, on the other hand, is a language in spatial medium. Writing takes language out of the constraints and immediacy of time and arranges it hierarchically.

Boardman and Frydenberg (2002:11) define writing as a continuous process of thinking and organizing rethinking, and recognizing. Next, O'Malley and Pierce (1996: 136) support that writing skill is a personal act in which writer takes ideas and transform them into "self-initiative" topic. In other words, writer

will draw something based on his/her background knowledge and complex mental process in developing new insight.

Furthermore, Perkins (2005: 47) says that writing is a process that requires writers to develop a cognitive awareness of the writing choices available to them. In order for writers to make choices about their content and style, they need to be reminded and further informed about those choices open to them. Thus, there are some aspects of writing which should be recognized by writers, awareness, as well as how researched information and their own claims about that research can most effectively and efficiently help them communicate to a listening audience.

According to Dumais (in Septiwi, 2007), writing in English is meant to fill the gap that exist between the ability to express ideas, feeling, opinions, and thought and the ability to express the same things in written form in English.

Moreover, Byrne (in McDonough and Shaw 1988: 183) explains that writing is a process of encoding (putting message into words) carried out with the reader (audience) in mind. So, the degree of crafting that needs to be done, and at what level, will also determined to some extent by the address. Stylistic choices, in other words, depend on why and for whom we are writing.

In other words, Brown (1994: 325) states that written product are often the result of thinking, drafting, and revising procedures that require specialized skills, skill that not every speakers develops naturally. The upshot of the compositional nature of writing pedagogy that focuses students on how generate ideas, how to organize them coherently, how to use discourse markers and rhetorical conventions to put them cohesively into a written text, how to revise text for clearer meaning, how to edit text for appropriate grammar, and how to produce a final product.

According to Ngabut (2003: 20), there are four common problems in writing they are in content, organizing, vocabulary, and grammar. First is content. When the students were encountered with the problem of identifying main ideas and supporting sentences they could not produce an effective paragraph of text. This happens since they are not able to formulate main ideas and supporting sentences into a paragraph. Second is organizing. An effective or good paragraph of text describes all the things in the paragraph logically, clearly, and easily to make the readers understand. The good paragraph of text appears in the topic of the text and it describes specifically in details.

Third is vocabulary. Vocabulary plays a very important role in constructing a good paragraph. By choosing appropriate words, the writer will be able to communicate his/her ideas, opinions, even disagreements smoothly. Fourth is grammar. A good paragraph of a text describes the sentence structure comprehensively covers the patterns of sentences construction and the good order of the words in sentences sequence.

Teaching writing in second and foreign language has been an interesting topic for many researchers. Many theories and methodologies have discovered different perspectives that can be applied in the classroom. The main point for this situation is to find out what students need to learn and what teachers need to provide for effective writing instruction. In teaching writing, the teacher can use many teaching writing strategies. It can be done by using pictures, outlining,

reading text, storytelling, real experiences, and some others. Most of teaching writing is different from one to another.

Referring to the English curriculum of School Based Curriculum or *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP)*, the purpose of writing for the Junior High School is to encourage the students to write some kinds of texts in the form of functional texts (advertisements, brochures, personal letters, and announcements and notice) and monolog texts (procedure, descriptive, recount, narrative, and report). These texts have their own characteristics, such as social function, generic schematic structures, lexical items, and grammatical features.

Based on *KTSP* curriculum, the objectives of teaching writing is to make students be able to create short functional texts and simple monolog texts are descriptive, recount, narrative, procedure, and report. The students should understand the social function (purpose), generic structure, and language features of the texts. The distribution of the texts given can be seen in this following table:

Table 1
The Distribution of the Texts Given in Junior High School

	Descriptive	Recount	Narrative	Procedure	Report
Grade VII, semt 1					
Grade VII, semt 2	√			√	
Grade VIII, semt 1	√	√			
Grade VIII, semt 2		√	√		
Grade IX, semt 1				√	√
Grade IX, semt 2			√		√

While Cogan (2006) confirms that recount text is written to retell event with the purpose of either informing or entertaining their audience or readers. The students are expected to express their ideas about the experience or last events focused to inform the readers. Gerot and Wignell (1994: 194) stated that recount text is a text that retells events for the purpose of informing or entertaining. It tells an event or an experience happened in the past.

Knapp and Watkins (2005: 223) say that recount is the simplest text type in the genre of narrating. Formally, recount is a sequential text that does little more than sequence a series of events. This idea is in accordance with Pardiyono (2007: 63), who argues that there is no complication among the participants and that make it simpler and different from narrative.

According to KTSP curriculum, recount text is one of text types that must be mastered by Junior High School students. The recount text is taught twice in Junior High School, in first and second semester of grade eight. This text is first introduced in the first semester. Then, it is taught again in second semester. Thus,

the students have to know the purpose/social function, generic structure, and language features of a recount text.

Derewianka (1995) states that, recount is a piece of text that retells past events, usually in the order in which they happened or tell other people about something that has happened and in order words to retell the real past activities, experiences, or events. Furthermore, he also explains that the recount text consists of three types; they are personal recount, factual recount, and imaginative recount. First, the personal recount means to retell of activities that the writer has been personally involved in. Second, the factual recount means that the text tells about recording the particulars of an incident. The last one is the imaginative recount, it means taking on an imaginary role and giving details of event.

Gerot and Wignell (1994: 194) reveal the social function of recount is to retell events for the purpose of informing or entertaining. Board of studies (in Hyland 2002:99) explains more about the social function of recount by distinguishing the social function of factual and literary recounts. In factual recount, the purpose is to document a series of events and evaluate it. Besides, the purpose of the literary recount is to tell a sequence of events to entertain the reader.

So, the research concerned with the students' ability and problems faced in writing recount text. Based on the problems and supported by relevant theories, the researcher tried to analyze the students' ability and the sources of the problems that the students faced in writing recount text.

B. Research Methodology

The design of this research was a descriptive study. The aim of descriptive research is to determine and describe the things and also to analyze interrelationship of the data. He also states that it involves data collection in order to answer the question concerning the current status of the subjects of the study. Since this is the descriptive research, the writer describes the phenomena. So, the purpose of the study is to analyze the ability and problems by the students of SMPN 29 Padang in writing a recount text. The instruments used were a writing test and questionnaires. The writing test was used to measure the students' ability in writing recount text. The questionnaire would be given to the students to find out their problems and difficulties in writing recount text.

The data of this research were collected from 30 students of second grade of SMPN 29 Padang registered in 2011/2012 academic year. After doing the test, the result of the test would be scored by three different raters. Besides that, the data from the questionnaires analyzed by using the formula proposed by Sudjana (2005) to know the percentage each item.

C. Result and Discussion

The researcher continued to analyze the data after she conducted the test. The data obtained from the result of the students' writing test, which consist of 30 students. The researcher discussed the data analysis by determining the table of criterion of students' writing recount text. The result was viewed from the mean

score of the students in writing recount text. The total score of students' writing was 50,41. Besides that, the students' writing ability analyzed by aspects of writing that proposed by Cohen. There were five aspects of writing; they were content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics.

After getting the result of written recount text, the researcher categorized it into the table criterion of writing score proposed by Cohen (1994: 328). The total of students in the list of frequency level can be seen in the following table:

Table 6
Total student in each level

Range of Real Score	Frequency	Total of Students	Percentage
80 – 100	Excellent	1	3.33%
61 – 80	Good	3	10.00%
41 – 60	Average	23	76.67%
21 – 40	Poor	1	3.33%
0 – 20	Very poor	2	6.67%

From the data above, we can see the total score of students' writing is 50.41. Moreover, from the list of frequency level, can be seen more than 50% of students in the average level. It means that the second grade students' of SMPN 29 Padang can categorized into average level of writing.

In conducting the research, the researcher also used questionnaire to know the students' problems in writing recount text. The questionnaire was divided into five indicators; content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. Each indicator was divided into 5 questions. The answer for each question was analyzed in the form of percentage.

a. Content

The students' problem in writing recount text would analyzed based on aspects of writing that proposed by Cohen. First aspect was content. The students at second grade of SMPN 29 Padang had poor level in content of writing. It means that the students have some problems in content of writing. There are many students are difficult to create a good recount text. The students have limited

knowledge to develop a topic. So, the content of their writing is not clear and some statements are weak

Moreover, from the questionnaire, there are five questions which deal with content. The data showed that the average of students answered toward the content in writing. There are 22,00% of students answered almost never, 36,67% of students answered seldom, 28,00% of students answered sometime, 9,33% of students answered often, and 4,00% of students answered very often. From the data, it can be seen more than 50,00% of students give answered that they almost never have problem in content of writing. It means that the students feel they have a good ability in content of writing. The students can developed a topic become a good paragraph and arranged some ideas correctly and accurately. The students did not face the problem in the content. So, the students had a good ability in content of writing. The students did not have any problems in the content. The detail can be seen in the table below:

Table 7
Percentage of Students Answered toward their problems in the content

No.	Statements	HTP	JR	KD	S	SS
1	Content of paragraph that I had been made was not appropriate with the topic that had been given	8 (26,67%)	11 (36,67%)	9 (30,00%)	1 (3,33%)	1 (3,33%)
2	I got difficulties in developing the topic that had been given	5 (16,67%)	14 (46,67%)	6 (20,00%)	4 (13,33%)	1 (3,33%)
3	I had limited knowledge about the topic that had been given	10 (33,33%)	7 (23,33%)	8 (26,67%)	3 (10,00%)	2 (6,67%)
4	Content of paragraph that I had been made not really detail and clear.	6 (20,00%)	10 (33,33%)	9 (30,00%)	4 (13,33%)	1 (3,33%)
5	I got difficulties to express the ideas in writing recount text	4 (13,33%)	13 (43,33%)	10 (33,33%)	2 (6,67%)	1 (3,33%)

	Average	**22,00 %**	**36,67 %**	**28,00 %**	**9,33%**	**4,00%**

b. Organization

The second aspect of writing was organization. In this aspect, the second grade students of SMPN 29 Padang did not have any problems. The students had a good level in organization of the text. Each paragraph was coherent; the students also paid attention to the sequence of sentence in each paragraph.

From the questionnaire, there were five questions in the questionnaire which deal with organization of the text. The data shown that 34,67% of students answered almost never, 28,00% of students answered seldom, 21,33% of students answered sometime, 10,00% of students answered often, and 6,00% of students answered very often. More than 60,00% of students answered that they did not have any problems in organization of the text. It means that the students had a good comprehension in organization of the text. The students did not face the problems in organization of the text.

Based on the previous discussion, it can be concluded that the students had a good knowledge in organization of the text. More than a half of students answered that they did not have problem toward the organization of the text. The detail can be seen in the table below:

Table 8
Percentage of Students Answered toward their problems in the organization

No.	Statements	HTP	JR	KD	S	SS
6	I rarely pay attention to generic structure of recount text before making it	3 (10,00 %)	7 (23,33 %)	14 (46,67 %)	4 (13,33 %)	2 (6,67%)
7	The ideas that I shared was not clear	15 (50,00 %)	7 (23,33 %)	3 (10,00 %)	3 (10,00 %)	2 (6,67%)
8	The ideas that I shared in recount text was not logic and hard to understand	11 (36,67 %)	9 (30,00 %)	6 (20,00 %)	3 (10,00 %)	1 (3,33%)
9	Each paragraph was not	13 (43,33	8 (26,67	4 (13,33	3 (10,00	2

	coherent	%)	%)	%)	%)	(6,67%)
10	I rarely pay attention the sequence of sentence in each paragraph	10 (33,33 %)	11 (36,67 %)	5 (16,67 %)	2 (6,67%)	2 (6,67%)
	Average	**34,67 %**	**28,00 %**	**21,33 %**	**10,00 %**	**6,00%**

c. Vocabulary

The third aspect of writing was vocabulary. Based on the students' recount text, there were many students had lack of vocabulary. The students got difficulties in expressing the ideas because of limited vocabulary. So, in this aspect, the second grade students of SMPN 29 Padang had some problems.

From the questionnaire, there were five questions in the questionnaire which deal with vocabulary. It is analyzed from the data that the students had lack of vocabulary in writing. The table shown that 58,00% of students agree that indicated the students had limited vocabulary. It makes them difficult to write a good paragraph. From the data, it can be seen the average of students answered toward their vocabulary. There are 7,33% of students answered almost never, 12,67% of students answered seldom, 22,00% of students answered sometime, 36,00% of students answered often, and 22,00% of students answered very often. It means that the students have lack of vocabulary. It is proved by more than 50,00% of students give answeres that the students have problem in vocabulary.

Based on the previous discussion, it can be concluded that the students still have problem in the knowledge of vocabulary. The students still have limited amount of vocabulary that makes them hard to write a good paragraph. The detail can be seen in the table below:

Table 9
Percentage of Students Answered toward their problems in Vocabulary

No.	Statements	HTP	JR	KD	S	SS
11	I often did some mistakes in choosing words	2 (6,67%)	3 (10,00 %)	3 (10,00 %)	17 (56,67 %)	5 (16,67%)
12	I got difficulties in expressing the ideas because of lack	3 (10,00 %)	4 (13,33 %)	7 (23,33 %)	12 (40,00 %)	4 (13,33%)

	vocabulary					
13	I often repeated a word in writing a paragraph	4 (13,33 %)	8 (26,67 %)	10 (33,33 %)	6 (20,00 %)	2 (6,67%)
14	I always used the simple words in writing a text	1 (3,33%)	2 (6,67%)	11 (36,67 %)	9 (30,00 %)	7 (23,33%)
15	I always saw the dictionary when writing in English	1 (3,33%)	2 (6,67%)	2 (6,67%)	10 (33,33 %)	15 (50,00%)
	Average	**7,33%**	**12,67 %**	**22,00 %**	**36,00 %**	**22,00%**

d. Grammar

The fourth aspect of writing is grammar. Based on students' recount text, the second grade students of SMPN 29 Padang had poor level in grammar. Almost half students faced some problems in writing recount text. It caused by the lack of ability in grammar. The students got difficulties in making a good and correct sentence. Sometimes, the students did not pay attention in using the connecting words in recount text.

From the questionnaire, there are five questions which deal with students' answered toward their grammar in writing. The data shown that more than 50.00% of students answered they have problem in grammar that indicated the students did not really master grammar in writing. This situation made them difficult to write a good sentence because the students feel hard to learn about grammar. The average of students' answered toward the grammar in writing, there are 10,00% of students answered almost never, 14,00% of students answered seldom, 20,67% of students answered sometime, 43,33% of students answered often, and 12,00% of students answered very often.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the students have problem in grammar of writing. The students have limited knowledge of grammar, so that the students feel hard to make a good sentence. The detail can be seen in the table below:

Table 10
Percentage of Students Answered toward their problems in Grammar

No.	Statements	HTP	JR	KD	S	SS
16	I often faced difficult in making a good and correct sentence because the lack ability in grammar	2 (6,67%)	3 (10,00%)	5 (16,67%)	15 (50,00%)	5 (16,67%)
17	I did not pay attention in using the connecting words in recount text	3 (10,00%)	4 (13,33%)	6 (20,00%)	13 (43,33%)	4 (13,33%)
18	I often did some mistakes in using action verbs in past tense form	5 (16,67%)	5 (16,67%)	6 (20,00%)	11 (36,67%)	3 (10,00%)
19	I seldom pay attention the aspects in grammar, such as the using of first person pronouns, specific participant, etc.	2 (6,67%)	4 (13,33%)	7 (23,33%)	15 (50,00%)	2 (6,67%)
20	I always faced problem in tense that will be used	3 (10,00%)	5 (16,67%)	7 (23,33%)	11 (36,67%)	4 (13,33%)
	Average	**10,00%**	**14,00%**	**20,67%**	**43,33%**	**12,00%**

e. Mechanics

The last aspect of writing is mechanics. The students at second grade of SMPN 29 Padang had a good level in mechanics of writing. It means that the students did not have some problems in mechanics. Only few errors in spelling and punctuation that was found in the students' recount text.

From the questionnaire, there are five questions in the questionnaire that deal with mechanics. This aspect got positive responses from the students. More than half of the students answered they have a good comprehension in mechanics of writing. The table shown that 78,66% of students answered seldom and almost never they have problems in mechanics of writing. The average of students'

answered toward the mechanics of writing, there are 37,33% of students answered almost never, 41,33% of students answered seldom, 14,67% of students answered sometime, 4,67% of students answered often, and 2,00% of students answered very often. It means that the students did not face the problems in mechanics of writing. The students have a good comprehension in mechanics of writing.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the students have a good comprehension in mechanics of writing. They did not faced the problems in mechanics of writing. The detail can be seen in the table below:

Table 11
Percentage of Students Answered toward their problems in mechanics of writing

No.	Statements	HTP	JR	KD	S	SS
21	I often did some mistakes in writing a word in English	10 (33,33%)	12 (40,00%)	6 (20,00%)	1 (3,33%)	1 (3,33%)
22	I often did some mistakes in using punctuation	11 (36,67%)	16 (53,33%)	2 (6,67%)	1 (3,33%)	0 (0,00%)
23	I often did some mistakes in using capital letters	15 (50,00%)	10 (33,33%)	2 (6,67%)	3 (10,00%)	0 (0,00%)
24	I often did some mistakes in spelling	9 (30,00%)	14 (46,67%)	5 (16,67%)	1 (3,33%)	1 (3,33%)
25	The paragraph that I made was not clear because my hand writing was not good, so that difficult for teacher to give a grade	11 (36,67%)	10 (33,33%)	7 (23,33%)	1 (3,33%)	1 (3,33%)
	Average	**37,33%**	**41,33%**	**14,67%**	**4,67%**	**2,00%**

In this research, the researcher got the data from the writing test and questionnaire that made by second grade students' of SMPN 29 Padang. After obtaining the data in writing recount text, the result of the level mastery of writing, more than 70,00% of students get the score over 40. It means that the students are in the average level.

Based on the questionnaire, the students have some problems in writing recount text. They also have some problems in mastery of vocabulary and grammar. They do not mastered grammatical forms well and they have limited vocabulary. Besides that, based on the result of writing test, the students have problems in content, vocabulary, and grammar in writing recount text. It means that between writing test and questionnaire has different result. However, the researcher more believed to the writing test result than the questionnaire result.

In summary, the ability in writing recount text of the second grade students' of SMPN 29 Padang has average achievement. Meanwhile, based on the data from the questionnaires showed that the second grade students' of SMPN 29 Padang still have some problems in writing recount text.

D. Conclusions

Based on the result of the research, the data analysis shows the mean score of the students. In this research the average of the students got the mean scores under 60. It means that the eight grade students of SMPN 29 Padang are in the average level in writing ability. Moreover, the students' problems in writing recount text would analyze through writing test and the questionnaire. Based on the writing test result, the students have some problems in writing recount text. The students did not really master in content, vocabulary, and grammar of writing aspect. However, based on the questionnaire that researcher gives to the students, some students still have some problems in writing recount text but the students did not faced the problem in content of writing. The students only have problems in vocabulary and grammar. This condition happened caused by the students not serious in the fill each statements of the questionnaire.

Note: This article was written based on the writer's research on her final project under the guidance of Dr. Refnaldi, M. Litt and Rusdi Noor Rosa, S. S, M. Hum as the advisors.

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