

# An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Writing Narrative Text

*by Sultan Baa*

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# An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Writing Narrative Text

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## Abstract

This study aims to find out the difficulties were experienced by the students in writing narrative text. This study used descriptive qualitative method. To achieve the research objectives, researchers used written test and interview as the instruments in collecting the data. The subjects of this study were students of XI IPS 1 in SMAN 5 Bone, there were 26 students as the participants and there were six students as the respondent of the interview. This study used random sampling technique to determine the subject of research. Based on the results of the study, the researchers found that difficulties were experienced by the Eleventh-grade students of SMAN 5 Bone are classified into psychological difficulties, linguistic difficulties, and cognitive difficulties. Psychological difficulties were experienced by the students are low confidence, low motivation, and writing anxiety. They also experienced difficulties in four writing aspects, there are; vocabulary and language use which are classified into linguistic difficulties, content and mechanic which are classified into cognitive difficulties. Then, the most difficulties that happened to the students when writing narrative text are vocabulary and language use aspect. The students still had limited vocabulary. They also are less knowledge about English grammatical. In accordance to those difficulties, students also have internal problems; writing anxiety, low confidence and motivation.

Keywords: *Student Difficulties, Narrative Text, Writing Aspects.*

## 1. Introduction

English is one of languages in the world that known as an international language. It has evolved from centuries and has known in every country. In Indonesia, English is known as foreign language that formally taught at school from elementary until university level. The government is aware that English is important for global development nowadays. Therefore, learning and teaching English language is considered to be an important part of Indonesian educational system to develop science and technology.

In learning English, the learners should grasp and master all language elements and language competencies. The elements of the language cover three aspects. They are grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Beside language elements, there are language competencies that learners should master and grasp; reading, writing, listening, and speaking. These language skills are divided in two parts; productive skill (writing and speaking and receptive skill (reading and listening). Among the language competencies, writing is the most difficult learning ability in learning English because writing requires many aspects.

As one of four language competencies, writing ability has been assumed the most challenging and complicated because it has to require mastery of grammar, spelling, and vocabulary. The ability to write is very necessary for the academic context, business and personal relation in the global community. Therefore, students should be practicing the writing skill (Weigle, 2002).

Written English is more formal than spoken language. Somebody frequently uses short answer while speaking English and sometimes ignores grammar. When writing, however, it requires correct grammar form, verb emphasis, vocabulary, punctuation, and other elements. In writing, the students also should learn to write the correct word, phrase, clause, and sentence. Therefore, the students frequently complain and have not been involved in communicating their thoughts and ideas by written English. That is because English language is very different with the native language Indonesia, like in its syntax, organization, vocabulary, and spelling.

Some students whose are poor in English, especially in their writing skill, make multiple errors because they have been insufficiently exposed to second language learning. The error or misunderstanding will always arise in studying second language. In addition, studying second language is more complicated than learning mother tongue, because the two languages have different structures. Because of this, the writer needs to analyze the difficulties that encountered by the eleventh-grade students in writing narrative to know the kind of difficulties and to prevent any mistakes in composing narrative text.

This research involved the narrative text to finding kind of difficulties were experienced by students. It is because narrative text is the most common text that has always been taught

in the class from grade one to grade three. Based on the observation held by the researchers, that is found that the students particularly in grade eleventh in SMAN 5 Bone encounter more difficulties in writing narrative text than in writing the other types.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2. 1. Definition of Analysis**

According to McCarthy (1991), analysis is the process of breaking down a complex substance or topic into smaller parts to get a proper understanding of that. The other opinion of definition about analysis is stated by Wooffit, as cited in Afriani (2019), Analysis is one of the key methodological approaches to the study. Based on the definitions, it can be said that analysis is the process by the meaning and sense that are made of the data collection in qualitative research.

### **2. 2. Definition of Writing**

Hairstone (1986) defined writing as a tool of discovery. Writing generates new ideas by assisting us in making connections and recognizing relationships. Writing also assists us to recognize our ideas and thoughts; we can compile them into a clear form. Besides, writing can make us become active learners rather than passive learners. According to Harmer (2005), writing is a productive skill which necessary emotion and thought, and it need to be practiced. The practice can be consisting of copying words or sentences from the ideas based on the writer's experience, knowledge, or point of view. Writing make us find our ideas and help us to process the information that can be shared for the others. The previous definition leads to the conclusion that writing is more than just a language. Writing is a skill that anyone with the desire to express their opinion, feelings, thoughts, and

so on can learn. It is also a communication tool, and writing is a difficult skill to master because it is an unnatural act that requires loud thought, as well as a method of remembering and thinking.

### **2. 3. Definition of Narrative Text**

Oshima and Hogue (2007) stated that narration is writing of story. Narrative concludes story of sequence events that involves characters. In writing narrative text, it means writing about events which happen in the past. In the other hand, Anderson (1997) said that narrative text presents a view of the world that informs and entertain the reader. Other definition of narrative text is stated by Kane (2000), narrative text is a text that presents the events that is truthful with some accident happened. Narrative text is a kind of events or action that the truly characters do.

### **2. 4. Generic Structure of Narrative Text**

Derewianka (1990) states the narrative generic structure. There are; 1) Orientation: introducing the main characters of the story, when the action is happened (time), and where the story is taking place. 2) Complication: showing the problem in the story. 3) Resolution: the problem (crisis) is resolved, either in a happy ending or in a sad (tragic) ending.

### **2. 5. Language Features of Narrative Text**

As cited in Afriani (2019), Joyce and Feez stated the language features that usually found in a narrative text are: Individualize and focus on specific participants with defined identities, the majority of participants are humans or animals with human characteristics; there are a lot of time-related linking words; the use of action verbs that refer to what the human

participant thought, said, or felt; using the past tense; the tenses of the dialogue frequently changed to the present or future; using descriptive language to enhance and develop the story by conjuring up images in the minds of the readers; it is possible to write in the third person (she, he, and they) or the first person (I, we).

### **2. 6. Narrative Test Writing Aspects**

Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hearfiel, and Hughey (1981) state that there are five writing aspects, namely: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanic. The researchers will analyze the students' difficulties in narrative text using criteria of assessing writing by Jacob et al. (1981). These are the criteria:

- a. Content
- b. Organization
- c. Vocabulary
- d. Language Use
- e. Mechanic

### **2. 7. Students Difficulties in Written Text**

Harmer (2005) stated that difficulties were experienced by the students in written text are vocabulary, grammar, handwriting, and spelling. While According to Byrne (1997), there are three major difficulties in writing, they are psychological difficulties, linguistic difficulties (vocabulary and language use), cognitive difficulties (content, organization, and mechanic).

#### **a. Psychological Difficulties**

The difficulty of developing written material more focuses on the psychological problem. Byrne (1997) said that psychological difficulty is a difficulty caused by there is no interaction or feedback from the reader to the author. Psychological

difficulty is a difficulty that related to self-contained or internal problems such as lack of confidence, lack of motivation, and writing anxiety.

b. Linguistic Difficulties (vocabulary and language use)

Byrne (1997) stated that Linguistic difficulties are difficulties in forming English sentences, for instance, the author makes mistake in choosing structure of sentence, so a sentence become not appropriate with the true meaning. Linguistic difficulties related to the ability of the author in applying language rules based on the writing standards. Linguistic difficulties are about grammar, vocabulary, language use, and choice of sentence.

c. Cognitive Difficulties (content, organization, and mechanic)

Byrne (1997) stated that cognitive difficulties are difficulties related to the author's understanding about written instruction aspects. Cognitive difficulties include content problems, organization, and mechanic such as spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing.in reaction and are a result of the stimulus process.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Design

This study used a descriptive qualitative research design. Hatch (2002) state that qualitative study is intended to investigate reality about human behaviors in their natural setting and context. A qualitative study does not begin with a hypothesis, and the participants are not subjected to any form of control or treatment (the students and the teacher). This study investigated and described the phenomenon that refers to the difficulties faced by students when writing narrative text.

#### 3.2. Instruments of Research

The first main step in a research is data collection technique, because the main purpose of a research is to obtain data. The researchers will not be able to obtain the data unless he or she understands the data collection technique. There two instruments were used in this research; writing test and interview. In writing test, there are 26 students will be tested and they were asked to demonstrate their writing abilities on a specific topic. In this research, the topics of the written test were about: 1) Students' best or worst experience, and 2) The history about their region. Further, interview was taken to find some additional information about the problem were faced by the students of XI IPS 1 of SMAN 5 Bone. There were six students that be selected for the interview in this study.

#### 3.3. Analisis Data

The study analyzed the students' writing test result and the result of interview by the following step:

a. Writing Test

This study used qualitative method to analyze data collected after it had been obtained. Jacob et al. (1981) distinguishes five aspects writing: content with 30 points, language use worth 25 points, organization and vocabulary with 20 points, and mechanic worth 5 points. The study analyzed the writing test by using scoring rubric of writing and criteria scoring writing (by Jacob et al. (1981). Then, the researchers computed mean score by applying formula as recommended by Arikunto (2006):

$$M = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

Where:

M : Mean score

$\Sigma X$  : Total score

N : Number of students

#### b. Interview

Data collected from the interview were analyzed as follow:

- 1) Collecting the raw data
- 2) Transcribing the recording
- 3) Drawing conclusion

#### 4. Findings

The findings of the research show the result of the written test and interview to answer the

research question in the first chapter. The research question is: What the difficulties were experienced by Eleventh Grade students of SMAN 5 Bone in writing narrative text? There were 26 students of the eleventh grade of Social Science in SMAN 5 Bone taken as the participant in this research. The data of students' writing were gaining by scoring the writing test result about the history of their region or their best or worst experience and analyzing that measured based on five writing aspects; content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanic (Jacob et al., 1981).

Table 1. Students' Writing Score

Writing Aspects	Score Level	Criteria	Frequency (N=26)	Percentage (%)
Content	30 – 27	Excellent to very good	1	4
	26 – 22	Good to average	7	27
	21 – 17	Fair to poor	16	61
	16 – 13	Very poor	2	8
Organization	20 – 18	Excellent to very good	1	4
	17 – 14	Good to average	17	65
	13 – 10	Fair to poor	8	31
	9 – 7	Very poor	0	0
Vocabulary	20 – 18	Excellent to very good	0	0
	17 – 14	Good to average	7	27
	13 – 10	Fair to poor	19	73
	9 – 7	Very poor	0	0
Language Use	25 – 22	Excellent to very good	0	0
	21 – 18	Good to average	5	19
	17 – 11	Fair to poor	21	81
	10 – 5	Very poor	0	0
Mechanic	5	Excellent to very good	0	0
	4	Good to average	8	31
	3	Fair to poor	17	65
	2	Very poor	1	4

Based on the Table 1 Students' Writing Score, the current research found that most of the students are categorized in fair to poor criteria in four aspects, there are vocabulary (linguistic difficulties), language use (linguistic difficulties), content (cognitive difficulties), and mechanic (cognitive difficulties). Data collected from the result of writing test showed

that the most of students in second grade of social science in SMAN 5 Bone have experienced difficulties when writing and composing narrative text. The mean score of the students' writing test is 67.11 which are categorized as fair to poor criteria.

Based on the students' writing test and their explanation on the interview via Whatsapp, the students gave random responses about the difficulties they experienced in writing narrative text in psychological, linguistic, and cognitive difficulties. The explanations about difficulties faced by students in Eleventh Grade of SMAN 5 Bone will be presented below based on Byrne's (1997) theory.

#### 4. 1. Psychological Difficulties

Based on the interview, it is known that the psychological difficulties experienced by the students are lack of confidence, lack of motivation, and writing anxiety. Students have low confidence in writing narrative text because of their lack of knowledge about this kind of text. Further, students also have low motivation; some of them prefer to speak English rather than write English essay and indeed some of them do not really like English. Then about writing anxiety, some students had writing anxiety while writing narrative text such as writing under the time pressure and getting the difficult topic.

##### Extract 1

(Student 1, 22/12/2021/No.8)

*...Iya. Kadang saya merasa tidak pede ketika menulis cerita apalagi cerita fiksi atau karangan. Saya takut kalau saya melakukan kesalahan dalam menulis teks berbahasa Inggris. Apalagi saya lebih suka berbicara dalam bahasa Inggris daripada menulis. (Yes, sometimes I feel that I am not assured in writing a story especially it is kind of fiction story. I worry about my mistakes in writing English text. Moreover, I prefer to speak in English rather than write).*

##### Extract 2

(Student 2, 22/12/2021/No.8)

*...Iya, tentu ada perasaan tidak percaya diri kak dengan tulisan saya, apalagi kalau*

*menulis cerita dengan waktu yang terbatas.... (Yes, obviously, I feel insecure with my writing, moreover if I write a story with limited time pressure, because making story needs much time like the process of getting idea for the story and so on).*

#### 4. 2. Linguistic Difficulties

Linguistic difficulties cover two writing aspects, there are vocabulary and language use.

##### a. Vocabulary

Based on the results of the data analysis, from 26 samples, 7 students are categorized as good to average, and 19 students are classified as fair to poor. The mean score in vocabulary aspect is 13.61. It is categorized as fair to poor. The students still had limited vocabulary and did some mistakes in choosing the word. There are the mistakes that made by the students:

- 1) *He convinced brought the stoned back to his home.* It will be better if the student use word 'sure' than 'convinced', for example: *he was sure that he brought the stone back to his home.*
- 2) *"Don't sit in front of the door, later your sustenance and your mate will be blocked."* It should be "Don't sit in front of the door cause it will make your fortune and spouse blocked."

According to the interview, there are several students that explain their difficulties while writing narrative text in vocabulary aspect.

##### Extract 1

(Student 1, 22/12/2021/No.7)

*...Alasannya karena banyak kosakata bahasa Inggris yang saya belum tahu dan saya merasa susah dalam memilih kata yang tepat untuk cerita saya.... (It is because of there are many English vocabularies that I do not know yet and*

I feel difficult in determining the correct word for my story.)

#### Extract 2

(Student 2, 22/12/2021/No.7)

...*Karena saya kekurangan kosakata bahasa Inggris dan itu membuat saya sulit menyusun kalimat karena ada kata-kata yang saya tidak tahu apa bahasa Inggrisnya.* (It is because I have limited knowledge of English vocabulary and it makes me difficult in arrange sentence because of there are some words that I do not know in English.)

#### b. Language Use

Based on the data analysis, from 26 samples, 5 students are categorized as good to average, and 21 students are categorized as fair to poor. One of the biggest difficulties that face by students was in this aspect, language use. The mean score in language use aspect is 14.96. It is categorized as fair to poor. These the mistake were made by the students:

- 1) Students made errors of tenses: The next day, the stone disappear from his home. It should be: The next day, the stone disappeared from his home.
- 2) Students made errors of word function: Granny Pakande fled the village. It should still use word Nenek, not Granny. It also should use word left rather than word fled. The correct sentence is: Nenek Pakande left the village, or Nenek Pakande fled from the village.
- 3) Students made errors of articles: After a weeks later, the coach of our art studio and our dance and music mentors took the initiative to hold a camping festival. The correct sentence is: After a week later, the coach of our art studio, dance, and music mentors took the initiative to hold a camping festival.
- 4) Students made errors of pronouns: When I Ruga opened the door, his hands and body

stuck to the door. It should use pronoun her, because I Ruga is a woman. The correct sentence: When I Ruga opened the door, her hands and body stuck to the door.

Based on the interview, there are several students that explain their difficulties while writing narrative text in vocabulary and language use aspect.

#### Extract 1

(Student 1, 22/12/2021/No.7)

...*saya juga kadang masih bingung soal tense di narrative text.* (I am also still confused about tenses used in narrative text.)

#### Extract 2

(Student 3, 22/12/2021/No.7)

...*Karena saya sangat lemah dalam penggunaan tenses dan grammar sehingga saya sulit menulis narrative text, saya juga sering takut salah kata atau tenses jika menulis teks bahasa Inggris.* (It is because of I cannot use the correct tenses and grammar so I am difficult in writing narrative text. I often worry that maybe I make mistake in using word or tenses in writing English text.)

### 4. 3. Cognitive Difficulties

Cognitive difficulties cover three writing aspects; there are content, organization and mechanic.

#### a. Content

According to the results of the data analysis, in content aspect, from 26 samples, 1 student is classified as excellent to very good, 7 students categorized good to average, 16 students are categorized as fair to poor, and 2 students are categorized as very poor. The mean score in content aspect is 20.19. It is categorized as fair to poor. According to the interview, there are several students that explain their difficulties while writing narrative text in content aspect.



Extract 1

(Student 5, 22/12/2021/No.5)

...Iya lumayan banyak. Susah menentukan apa yang harus kutulis, membingungkan sekali apalagi kalau ada kata yang kulupa apa bahasa Inggrisnya. (Yes, quite a lot. It is hard to determine about what to write, it is so confusing, especially if there are words that I forget in English.)

Extract 2

(Student 6, 22/12/2021/No.5)

...Dalam mengembangkan ide cerita, pengetahuan grammarku, dan pembendaharaan vocabulary yang kurang. (It is in developing idea, grammar, and vocabulary.)

b. Organization

According to the data analysis, from 26 samples, 1 student is classified as excellent to very good, 17 students categorized good to average, and 8 students are categorized as fair to poor. In this aspect, the researchers did not found many mistakes from the students' text. The mean score in organization aspect is 15.07 which are categorized as good to average. As the result of interview, it showed that most of students know about the organization of narrative text, which is orientation, complication, and resolution.

Extract 1

(Student 1, 22/12/2021/No.3)

...Orientation, complication, dan resolution. Orientation itu pengenalan cerita, complication itu terjadi konflik di cerita, dan resolution itu penyelesaian masalahnya. (It is orientation, complication, and resolution. Orientation is the introduction of the story, complication is the conflict of the story, and resolution is the problem solving.)

Extract 2

(Student 2, 22/12/2021/No.3)

...Yang pertama itu orientation, kalau yang kedua complication, dan yang terakhir itu resolution. (The first is orientation, the second is complication, and the last is resolution.)

c. Mechanic

Based on the data analysis, from 26 samples, 8 students are categorized as good to average, 17 students are categorized as fair to poor, and 1 student is categorized as very poor. The mean score in mechanic aspect is 3.26. It is categorized as fair to poor. These are the students mistake in mechanic aspect:

- 1) Students made errors of spelling; She still treatenet to wash small children from a distince. The correct spelling is: threatened and distance
- 2) Students made errors of punctuation. There are so many errors of punctuation made by the students. They do not put the period in the end of the sentence, they also do not know adjust the comma in their sentence.
- 3) Students made errors of capitalization. There are some students that do not use the capital letter for the first word in the sentence. There are also several students do not use the capital letter for name of people and region.

Based on the analysis of student's writing text and interview, it is found that students in eleventh grade of Social Science in SMAN 5 Bone experienced psychological, linguistic, and cognitive difficulties. It can be conclude that from five writing aspects according to Jacob et al. (1981), the students in XI IPS 1 of SMAN 5 Bone experienced the difficulties in four aspects when writing narrative text, that are vocabulary, language use, mechanic and content. From five writing aspects, the most difficult aspects experienced by Eleventh Grade students of SMAN 5 Bone are language use and vocabulary.

## 5. Discussion

After analyzing all of the data collected, it is important to discuss the result of the study. The aim is to figure out the answer of the research question. The research question is "What are the difficulties that were experienced by students in writing narrative text?" According to the analysis of student's writing and their responses on interview, it is found that students in eleventh grade of SMAN 5 Bone experienced difficulties in psychological difficulties, linguistic difficulties, and cognitive difficulties. From five writing aspects, students in Eleventh grade of SMAN 5 Bone experienced difficulties in four writing aspects; there are vocabulary and language use which is classified in to linguistic difficulties, content and mechanic which is classified in to cognitive difficulties.

As in psychological difficulties, the students have low motivation and confidence in writing narrative text. Psychological difficulties experienced by the students are lack of confidence, lack of motivation, and writing anxiety. Students have low confidence in writing narrative text because they were frightened of making mistake while writing, so some of them are difficult to start or complete their writing task. They also have low motivation, they feel lazy of writing English text because they have no idea about what to write, and indeed some of them do not really like English. It is relatable with study conducted by Humairoh (2021). The researchers found that one of the students' difficulties in psychological difficulties is low motivation. Some students did not have any interest in the topic that they are not good at. Then about writing anxiety, some students had writing anxiety while writing narrative text such as writing under the time pressure and getting the difficult topic. That is in relation

with Richards (1990) state that to writing well is difficult to learn, it is a lengthy process, one that induce anxiety and frustration in many students. Besides, Humairoh (2021) found that this difficulty was happen because the students thought that the vocabulary, they apply will be difficult if the topic is difficult.

Furthermore, in linguistic difficulties, students have problems with vocabulary and language use. Students have limited vocabulary list and poor choice of word. They are difficult in choosing the correct word form, diction, and idioms. Some students also made the meaning of word is confused or obscured because of their lack of vocabulary. They also experienced difficulties in translating from Indonesian to English because their lack of vocabulary list. This difficulty has been proven by previous research conducted by Telaumbanua (2020) that the students have limited vocabulary so they cannot arrange the sentence correctly. That is happen because students are lack of vocabulary. In addition to vocabulary, the students also experienced the difficulties in grammatical structure or in the language use aspects. Some of students have no idea which tense that must be applied in narrative text. Some of them still use the simple present tense rather than simple past tense when composing narrative text. It is related with the research conducted by Afriani (2019) that the grammar is one of difficulties were experienced by students especially in using tense and word diction. This is strengthened by research conducted by Sinaga (2020) that most of students faced difficulty in grammar especially in using tenses. Most of students still used present tense rather than past tense. Besides the tenses, students also had problems in articles, pronouns, and prepositions.

Further, for the cognitive difficulties, the students had problem in content aspect. They often get confused when writing and they cannot develop their idea. It is in line with Aulia (2019) that the students have difficulty in organizing their idea. They are limited knowledge of the subject that they want to write, they had difficulty in organizing their idea and writing a narration. It is in accordance with the research conducted by Afriani (2019) that one of the difficulties experienced by students is students have difficulty to explore idea in composing the story in narrative text. Besides, students also faced problem in mechanic aspect. Many of them still made spelling errors. Some students also did not use the punctuation well, such as the period, comma, and quotation mark. Besides that, some of them also did not consider the use of capitalization for the name for people, region, and at the beginning of the sentences. It is proven by the research conducted by Humairoh (2021) that students had problems with punctuation and spelling. Sometimes, students do not put comma or period in their text and made mistake in spelling word.

The current research was different with the study by Koilara et al. (2020). They said that the students struggled with narrative text in generic structure or organization aspect; students cannot distinguish between parts of generic structures. Whereas, the current research said that the mean score of organization aspect is 15.07 which is categorized as good to average. According to the interview result, it showed that most of students know about the organization of narrative text, which is orientation, complication, and resolution. Several students can explain more detail about the organization of the narrative text. The current study also did not have relation to study conducted by Muliani et al. (2019) that students have problem with organization in writing the

narrative essay. They found that students just wrote the orientation and complication without resolution or wrote complication and resolution without orientation.

## **6. Conclusion**

According to the findings and discussion, it can be summed that difficulties experienced by students in XI IPS 1 of SMAN 5 Bone in writing narrative text are classified into psychological difficulties, linguistic difficulties, and cognitive difficulties. Psychological difficulties were experienced by the Eleventh-grade students of SMAN 5 Bone are low confidence, low motivation, and writing anxiety. They also experienced difficulties in four writing aspects, there are; vocabulary and language use which are classified into linguistic difficulties, content and mechanic which are classified into cognitive difficulties. Then, the most difficulties that happened to the students when writing narrative text are vocabulary and language use aspect. The students still had limited vocabulary and make some mistake in choosing words. Students made errors of tenses, word function, articles, pronouns and using incorrect capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. Students are less knowledge about English grammatical structure and lack of vocabulary.

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