

STUDENTS' PROFICIENCY IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE AT SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL POPAYATO

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Abstract

The research objective was to find out the proficiency of the students' writing descriptive text with vocabulary, mechanics and organization. The population of the research was the first grade students at Senior High School of Popayato in the Academic Year of 2024/2025. The sample was taken by random sampling which consisted of 20 students. This research focused on students' proficiency in writing descriptive paragraph. In collecting the data, researcher used writing test as an instrument. The components analyzed were vocabulary, mechanics and organization. Researcher analyzed students' writing proficiency based on five categories: excellent, good, average, fair, poor. The results of the research showed that students still encounter difficulties in the vocabulary component, mechanics and student organizations.

Keywords: Students, Proficiency, Writing, Descriptive

Introduction

Writing is a basic language skill, as important as speaking, listening, and reading. Students need to know how to write letters, how to put written reports together, how to reply advertisement and increasingly how to write using electronic media, (Harmer, 2004). Writing is a progressive activity. When you first write something down, you have already been thinking about what you are going to say and how you are going to said it. Then after you finished writing, you read over what you have written and make changes and corrections. Therefore, writing is never a one step action, it is a process that has several steps.

Brown D.H, (2004) writing is a written product of thinking, drafting and revising that requires specialized skills on how to generate ideas, how to organize them coherently, how to use discourse markers and rhetorical conventions to put them cohesively into written text, how to revise text for clearer meaning, how to edit text for appropriate grammar and how to produce a final product. Jones, et.al, (2010) writing is a fundamental component of language. When a child writes, thoughts and knowledge are

blended together creating a unique meaning. Leech, N. G. et.al, (1983) writing has the advantages of relative permanence, which allows for record-keeping in a form independent of the memories of those who keep the records.

The difficulties that the students deal with in their writing have been appeared for a long time. Many students sometimes get stuck and could not accomplish their writing. Besides that, the students have a lot of ideas in their minds but they are worry to start and even they do not know how to develop the ideas. This problem is faced by not only the students as beginner writer but also an advance writer. Many researchers have found that the problems faced by the students in writing English is not only caused by the complexity of the writing itself, but also are influenced by the uninteresting and unsuitable teaching techniques in their writing class.

Concerning to the problems above, English teachers should make efforts with providing various techniques in order to encourage the students' learning writing skills effectively. In addition, they also have to be more creative to make the writing class more interesting, exciting and enjoyable. To fulfill these needs the teachers have to get right material and

right technique that suitable on the students' level. In this case, the teachers' role in applying interesting teaching methods is one of the important factors in creating a good atmosphere in the classroom activities. They should know how to build the learners' interest during the class, know how to design materials which are easy to be understood by students so that learning writing does not become monotonous thing.

Senior High School students of Popayato in Academic Year 2024/2025 in Pohuwato regency, particularly the first grade students was still had problems in writing especially in writing descriptive texts. Students were still difficult when they started writing texts. While descriptive text was one of the materials for students at senior high school.

Review of Literature

According to Harmer, (2004) that writing is a basic language skill, as important as speaking, listening, and reading. Students need to know how to write letters, how to put written reports together, how to reply advertisement and increasingly how to write using electronic media. Writing is a progressive activity. When you first write something down, you have already been thinking

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Leech N. G. et.al, (1983) writing has the advantages of relative permanence, which allows for record-keeping in a form independent of the memories of those who keep the records. It means that writing is different from other English language skills because writing is more permanent and its written in form. As a media to communicate between writers and readers, writing has to be understandable so the readers will know what the researcher means clearly. If the readers could not understand it clearly,

they will not catch the idea that the researcher wants to deliver.

The difficulty in terms of writing, which is said that writing skills are complex and difficult to teach, requiring mastery not only grammatical and rhetorical devices but also conceptual and judgments elements. It means that the teacher must bring the skills of grammatical rule and other skill in the teaching of writing.

Mukarto (2007) defines descriptive text is a kind of text to describe something. Writing descriptive means describing something, place or people in order to lead the reader feel writing itself. Descriptive writing is the domain of writing that develops images through the use of precise sensory words and phrases, and through devices such as metaphor and the sounds of words. Based on definition of descriptive text above, it can be concluded that descriptive text is a text which describe people, thing or place that write its physical appearance and characteristic of the object.

Sudarwati (2007) there are several characteristics of descriptive text. First, it focuses on what will be described, for instance, place, thing or people. Second, descriptive text uses simple present

tense as grammatical rule in writing itself. Third, for its title descriptive text uses noun phrase, for example in describing motorcycle. The title which is used not only motorcycle but also with its label or merk. Fourth, usually adjective is used to explain noun or the object in the descriptive text. The last one is that the description of the object is written from general to specific.

Method of the Research

The research method was descriptive qualitative. Creswell (2012) qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social human problem. The purpose of this research was to describe the first grade students' ability in writing descriptive text.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study reveal key aspects of senior high school students' proficiency in writing descriptive texts, with particular emphasis on the strengths and challenges observed in their performance. Data were collected through written assessments, student interviews, and teacher evaluations.

1. Proficiency in Writing Descriptive Texts

The analysis of the students' writing proficiency indicated that the majority of students demonstrated basic competence in creating descriptive texts. Many students were able to adequately describe people, places, and events using appropriate vocabulary and simple sentence structures. However, a noticeable portion of students struggled with organizing their ideas cohesively, often leading to disjointed descriptions that lacked clarity. While the overall content of their writing was often relevant, the lack of clear structure, such as proper introduction, body, and conclusion, hindered their ability to deliver well-rounded descriptions.

2. Strengths in Vocabulary Usage

One of the positive findings from the study was the students' effective use of descriptive vocabulary, particularly in terms of adjectives and sensory language. Many students were able to include vivid details, such as colors, shapes, and textures, that enhanced the descriptions of

objects or environments. These descriptive elements helped paint a clearer picture for the reader, showing that students had a solid understanding of vocabulary related to description. However, there were instances where students overused common adjectives (e.g., "beautiful," "big," "nice") rather than experimenting with more specific and varied vocabulary.

3. Challenges in Grammar and Sentence Structure

Despite their strengths in vocabulary, the students faced significant challenges in grammar and sentence structure. Many students made frequent errors in subject-verb agreement, punctuation, and tense consistency. These errors often disrupted the flow of their writing, making it difficult for readers to follow their descriptions effectively. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that grammar remains a significant obstacle for students in academic writing.

4. Organizational Issues

Another recurring issue identified

in the students' writing was the lack of proper organization. A number of students failed to follow a logical sequence in their descriptions, leading to confusion in the text. For instance, some students described an object in a random order rather than following a spatial or chronological order that would have made the description clearer and more engaging. This problem indicates that students may not have fully grasped the importance of structuring their writing in a coherent manner.

5. Impact of Teaching Methods

The findings also suggest that the current teaching methods employed in Popayato senior high schools may not be fully effective in addressing the needs of students in writing descriptive texts. Teacher feedback indicated that while descriptive writing was taught, there was not enough focus on helping students develop a more structured approach to writing. Furthermore, some teachers reported using more traditional methods that emphasized rote learning, which did not encourage students to

think critically about their writing process.

6. Student Motivation and Engagement

From student interviews, it was revealed that motivation plays a significant role in the quality of writing. Students who were more interested in the topics they were asked to describe showed higher levels of engagement and produced more detailed and accurate descriptions. Conversely, students who lacked interest in the topics often struggled to generate ideas and resorted to basic descriptions that lacked depth.

Discussion

The results of this study suggest that while Popayato senior high school students possess a foundational understanding of descriptive writing, there are several areas for improvement. First, students need more guidance in organizing their ideas coherently to produce well-structured descriptive texts. Teachers could address this by incorporating more lessons focused on the organization of writing, such as the use of outlines or graphic organizers. Additionally, more emphasis on grammar

and sentence structure is necessary to help students refine their writing skills and avoid errors that disrupt clarity.

Moreover, expanding students' vocabulary through varied activities, such as reading diverse descriptive texts and engaging in creative writing exercises, could help them move beyond common adjectives and improve the richness of their descriptions. Teachers may also benefit from integrating more interactive and student-centered methods into their teaching, which could increase student motivation and engagement, as these factors were shown to directly influence the quality of writing.

In conclusion, the proficiency of senior high school students in Popayato in writing descriptive texts reflects both strengths and weaknesses. By addressing issues related to organization, grammar, and vocabulary, and by adopting more effective teaching methods, it is possible to enhance students' overall writing abilities and help them achieve greater proficiency in descriptive writing.

The students descriptive writing based on the component of Vocabulary, Mechanic, and Organization:

The first was aspect of vocabulary. This aspect consists of word choices.

Indicator of word choices was chosen the appropriate and accurate words to express ideas. The result of data finding showed that the mean score in vocabulary aspect was 55% and regarding to the score classification theory it was categorized as average.

The highest score of the students in vocabulary was 4,5 and the lowest was 1,5. There were 4 or 20% students got point 4,5. Then, there were 11 or 55% students got point 3, and the last, there were 5 or 7,5% students got point 1,5. Thus, it can be concluded that the students' proficiency in writing descriptive text in term of vocabulary categorized average with the percentage 55%.

The second aspect was mechanic. There are two indicators in this aspect, they were punctuation and capitalization. The punctuation consists of comma, period, the colon, semicolon, apostrophe, quotation marks, and dash. The next capitalization consists of the first word in sentence, capitalize pronoun I, capitalize the titles of composition, capitalize the proper noun, capitalize name of detail, title, month, day, specific group or geographic areas, and specific structures. With the guide of aspect, the researcher collected and analyzed

the data and the result showed that the mean score in mechanic aspect was 45% and according to the score classification theory, it was categorized as average level.

The highest score of the students in mechanic was 4,5 and the lowest was 1,5. There were 4 or 20% students got point 4,5. Then, there were 9 or 45% students got point 3, and the last, there were 7 or 35% students got point 1,5. Thus, it can be concluded that the students' proficiency in writing descriptive text in term of mechanic categorized average with the percentage 45%. The students' ability of mechanics is on the average.

The third aspect was organization. There were two indicators in this aspect, they were identification and description. The identification consisted of identifying the name of place and location, describing features of the place. And the last description consisted of part, qualities, and characteristic. With the guide of aspect, the researcher was able to collect and analyze the data. The finding showed that the mean score in aspect of organizing idea was 45%, and according to the score classification theory, it was categorized as average level.

The highest score of the students in organization was 6 and the lowest was 2. There were 4 or 20% students got point 6. Then, there were 6 or 30% students got point 4 and the last, there were 10 or 50% students got point 2. It can be concluded that the students' ability in writing descriptive text in term of organization categorized average with the percentage 50%. The students' ability of organization was on the average level.

Based on the result of the students in writing descriptive text above. The proficiency in writing descriptive text in terms of vocabulary, mechanic and organization was still categorized in average. In addition, in term of vocabulary the highest students' frequency was 11 or 55%, students got the score under criteria minimum. In terms of mechanic, the highest students' frequency was 9 or 45%, students got score under criteria minimum and in term of organization only 10 or 50%, students as well got score under criteria minimum. The total mean score was 45.4. Thus, the students' proficiency in writing descriptive text was categorized on average. It means, the students still need more improvement in writing descriptive text.

Conclusion

The student's proficiency in writing descriptive text focused on vocabulary, mechanics & organization at the first grade students at Senior High School of Popayato. The students' score was 908 and the mean score was 45.4. There were 13 students got average score, 7 students got poor score and none of students got Excellent score as well as very poor score. The researcher used skill level score which includes very poor, poor, average, good, and excellent to determine students' proficiency.

The mean score data was calculated as in terms of vocabulary was 55%, in this category almost students made few misuse of vocabulary, limited range of words and word form understandable. In mechanics was 45%, in this category students' writing dominated by errors of punctuation and capitalization. And in term of organization was 50%. In this category, almost the students' writing in identification was not complete and description was arranged with few misuse of connectives.

Thus, it could be concluded that the students' proficiency in writing descriptive text was categorized on average level. It means, the students still

need more improvement in writing descriptive text.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to improve students' proficiency in writing descriptive texts at senior high schools in Popayato:

1. Enhance Instruction on Text Organization

It is crucial to provide students with more structured guidance on organizing their descriptive writing. Teachers should introduce methods such as outlining, mind mapping, or using graphic organizers to help students plan their writing before drafting. This will assist students in arranging their ideas logically and coherently, resulting in more organized and effective descriptions. Additionally, emphasizing the importance of clear introductions, well-developed bodies, and concise conclusions will help students understand how to structure their descriptive texts.

2. Focus on Grammar and Sentence Structure

To address the recurring issues in

grammar and sentence structure, teachers should incorporate focused grammar exercises into their lessons. This could involve targeted practice on common errors such as subject-verb agreement, punctuation, and tense consistency. Teachers might also provide students with individualized feedback on their writing, highlighting grammatical mistakes and offering strategies for improvement. Incorporating peer review sessions could also be beneficial in helping students identify and correct common errors in each other's writing.

3. Expand Vocabulary through

Reading and Writing Activities

Teachers should encourage students to read a variety of descriptive texts, including books, articles, and short stories, to expose them to a broader range of vocabulary. By analyzing how different authors use descriptive language, students can learn to incorporate more specific and varied adjectives and sensory details in their own writing. Furthermore, incorporating creative writing exercises, such as describing unfamiliar objects or

scenes, can stimulate students' imagination and help them develop a richer vocabulary.

4. Increase Student Motivation and Engagement

Since motivation was identified as a key factor in the quality of students' writing, it is recommended that teachers create more engaging and relevant writing prompts. Students are more likely to produce detailed and thoughtful descriptions when they are interested in the topic. Teachers could also introduce collaborative writing projects, allowing students to work in pairs or small groups to encourage peer interaction and increase engagement. By fostering a more interactive classroom environment, teachers can help students develop a greater sense of ownership over their writing.

5. Adopt Student-Centered Teaching Methods

To improve overall writing proficiency, teachers should consider shifting from traditional, teacher-centered methods to more student-centered

approaches. This could involve incorporating more hands-on, interactive activities, such as group discussions, writing workshops, and peer feedback sessions. By actively involving students in the learning process, teachers can create an environment that encourages creativity, critical thinking, and self-expression, all of which are essential for developing strong writing skills.

6. Provide Ongoing Assessment and Feedback

Regular formative assessments and feedback are essential for helping students monitor their progress and improve their writing skills. Teachers should implement periodic writing assessments to track student development and provide timely feedback on strengths and areas for improvement. Additionally, incorporating self-assessment techniques can encourage students to reflect on their own writing and identify specific goals for growth.

In conclusion, improving the proficiency of senior high school students in

Popayato in writing descriptive texts requires a comprehensive approach that addresses issues related to writing structure, grammar, vocabulary, and student motivation. By implementing these recommendations, educators can foster an environment that enhances students' writing abilities and prepares them for more advanced writing tasks in the future.

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