

AN ANALYSIS OF ELEVENTH-GRADE STUDENTS' ABILITY TO WRITE SHORT STORIES BASED ON PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

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Abstract: This study examined eleventh-grade students' ability to write short stories based on personal experience at SMAN 2 Kefamenanu. The main focus of this research was to analyze five aspects of writing short stories, namely content, organization, grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary, as well as the level of ability and difficulty of the students in writing short stories. It applied a qualitative and quantitative approach with tests and interviews as the instrument. The results showed that students had a "good" level of writing ability, with an average score of 81.31. However, some students still encountered difficulties in several aspects of writing, namely grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, and content. These difficulties occurred because students could not combine good sentences, lacked vocabulary, could not place punctuation marks and capital letters correctly, and could not explain the meaning of the topic they had determined. Therefore, errors occurred in their writing. The study provided advice for teachers to improve their teaching methods.

Keywords: personal experience, short stories, writing

INTRODUCTION

Writing is an essential skill that allows individuals to express their ideas, thoughts, and experiences in written form. "It is a productive skill that focuses on how to produce language than receive" (Al Hadad, et al., 2024). One popular genre of writing is the short story, which falls under the broader category of creative writing. Creative writing, as described by Sastrawacana (in Adeani, 2020), encourages students to move beyond the constraints of academic or professional writing and explore new ways to communicate their personal thoughts and emotions. However, many students face challenges when writing short stories, particularly in areas such as theme selection, vocabulary development, and the use of imagination.

Several studies have explored students' abilities and difficulties in writing short stories. For example, Adeani (2020) conducted research at Galuh Ciamis University, where students showed limited engagement with short story literature and tended to read popular short stories rather than critically analyzing the craft itself. Similarly, Wikanengsih and Ningrum (2021) focused on improving students' short story writing skills by using Adobe Flash in a quasi-experimental study. Their findings suggested that the discovery learning method, aided by technology, enhanced both students' motivation and their ability to write compelling short stories.

In a different context, Nuryatin and Irawati (2018) examined the needs of students and teachers regarding short story writing models that incorporate humanism and morality. Their research found that elementary schools had limited opportunities for short story writing due to the lack of literature lessons, leading to a gap in students'

exposure to creative writing. Furthermore, Nazila, Adisaputera, and Saragih (2020) developed teaching materials designed to help students write short stories based on personal experiences. This approach was found to be more effective than traditional student handbooks for 7th-grade students at Junior High School 2 Kejuruan Muda.

While these studies have provided valuable insights into different aspects of short story writing, including teaching methods, motivation, and materials, few have specifically focused on analyzing students' abilities and difficulties in writing short stories based on personal experience. Personal experience, as a subject of writing, allows students to create more authentic and meaningful stories that are both engaging and reflective of their lives.

This study aims to bridge the gap by investigating the specific challenges students face when writing short stories based on their personal experiences. By encouraging students to draw from their own lives, this research seeks to foster creativity, enhance writing skills, and help students better express themselves. Writing based on personal experience not only makes the writing process more accessible but also provides an opportunity for students to explore themes, emotions, and lessons that are both meaningful to them and relatable to their readers. Through this approach, students will gain the skills necessary to improve their writing, choose the most effective vocabulary, and develop their sentences in ways that capture their thoughts and experiences.

METHOD

This study employed a mixed-method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method was used to answer the research question regarding the extent of eleventh-grade students' ability to write short stories based on personal experiences. In contrast, the qualitative method was used to explore the difficulties students encountered when writing short stories.

The sample was selected through purposive sampling, and the eleventh-grade science class at High School 2 Kefamenanu was chosen, consisting of 22 students. To collect data, two instruments were used: a writing test and interviews.

Before administering the writing test to assess students' ability to write, the researcher provided an example text entitled *Vacation to Grandmother's House*. This text, based on a personal experience, was explained to the students to clarify the topic and content. Following the explanation, students were given 90 minutes to write their own short stories about a personal vacation experience.

After the writing test, the researcher conducted interviews with eight randomly selected students, due to time constraints. The interviews were conducted in Indonesian, and seven interview questions were prepared in advance to guide the discussion.

For the analysis of the writing test data, the researcher utilized a scoring rubric developed by C. Terrible, which evaluates content, organization, grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary. Based on the results of the rubric, students' writing abilities were classified into four levels (as shown in Table 1). The interview data were analyzed descriptively, capturing the students' responses and experiences.

Table 1. Four Level Classifications

No	Classification	Score
1	Excellent	86-100
2	Good	71-85
3	Fair	56-70
4	Very poor	41-55

Adopted from Wildayati's (2021)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The researchers provided a sample vacation story entitled *Vacation to Grandmother's House* to help determine students' ability to write short stories. After reading the example, students were asked to write about their own personal vacation experiences. The task was designed to assess their ability to compose a holiday-themed story. The text consisted of two paragraphs: an introduction and a description. Students used this sample as a guide to write their own stories, reflecting on their vacation experiences. The sample text helped students focus on describing the activities they engaged in during their holidays, encouraging them to use their own words and ideas while staying connected to the theme and title of the vacation story. Students' writing abilities were evaluated based on five indicators: content, organization, grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary. The results of the students' writing assessments are presented below.

Tabel 2. Students Individuals Score of Writing Vacation Story

Students	Aspect of Writing					Score
	C	O	G	M	V	
S1	30	17	21	4	16	88
S2	26	15	18	5	14	78
S3	26	16	18	4	10	74
S4	22	14	19	3	13	71
S5	22	14	19	4	17	76
S6	30	18	22	3	17	90
S7	29	14	20	4	15	82
S8	29	18	24	3	16	90
S9	22	17	18	3	10	70
S10	30	17	21	4	16	88
S11	26	15	18	4	10	73
S12	21	14	21	3	13	72
S13	29	18	23	4	13	87

S14	21	18	20	3	14	76
S15	23	15	18	4	12	71
S16	18	16	19	4	11	69
S17	25	20	18	3	16	82
S18	28	19	23	4	17	91
S19	30	20	21	4	14	89
S20	29	18	22	4	17	90
S21	30	20	24	3	16	93
S22	28	19	21	4	17	89
Total	574	372	448	81	314	1.789
Average	26.1	17.00	20.36	3.6	14.27	81.31

C= Content O= Organization G= Grammar M= Mechanics V= Vocabulary

The total score for all students was 1,589, with an average score of 81.31, placing the students in the "good" category. However, based on the five indicators of writing ability, students faced difficulties in organization, mechanics, and vocabulary. The average scores for these areas were as follows: Organization (17.00), Mechanics (3.6), and Vocabulary (14.24).

Out of the 22 students in the class, only 20 met the completion criteria based on the scoring rubric. The following students achieved the highest scores: S21 (93, excellent), S18 (91, excellent), S20 (90, excellent), S6 (90, excellent), S8 (90, excellent), S19 (89, excellent), S22 (89, excellent), S1 (88, excellent), S10 (88, excellent), S13 (87, excellent), and S7 (82, good). Additionally, S17 (82, good), S2 (78, good), S5 (76, good), S14 (76, good), S3 (73, good), S11 (73, good), S12 (72, good), S4 (71, good), and S15 (71, good) all received scores in the "good" category, although their scores varied.

Two students scored in the "fair" category: S9 (70, fair) and S16 (69, fair), with scores falling between 56 and 70. Therefore, the highest score achieved was 93, while the lowest score was 69. Overall, students' ability to write short stories in grade eleven was considered to be "good." A detailed breakdown of students' writing skills by category is presented in Table 3.

Tabel 3 .The Students Skor in Writing Short Stories

No	Score Range	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	86-100	Excellent	10	45%
2	71-85	Good	10	45%
3	56-70	Fair	2	10%
4	41-55	Very poor	-	-
Total			22	100%

Of the 22 students who took the writing test, 10 students (45%) scored between 86-100, categorized as "excellent"; 10 students (45%) scored between 71-85, categorized

as "good"; and 2 students (10%) scored between 56-70, categorized as "fair." Based on these results, the researchers concluded that the students' writing skills were generally at a good level. However, a few students were still at a fair level. This was primarily due to some students' ability to combine words into coherent stories, while others struggled to string sentences together. The difficulties students faced included a lack of vocabulary, improper use of punctuation and capital letters, and challenges in selecting the right connecting words. As a result, many students need to improve their ability to use punctuation and capitalization correctly, as well as connect words effectively, to make their stories more engaging and easier for readers to understand.

The researcher also conducted interviews with students to identify the difficulties they encountered while writing vacation stories. Seven interview questions were prepared, and the findings revealed the following:

First, students had difficulty forming sentences and combining words, which was reflected in their grammar. Of the 22 students, 9 scored below 19 out of 25 points in this area. Second, many students lacked sufficient vocabulary and struggled to combine Indonesian and English words appropriately, which impacted their vocabulary score. Eleven out of 22 students scored below 14 out of 20 points. Third, students had trouble correctly using punctuation and capitalizing words at the start of sentences, which was reflected in the mechanics aspect. Eight out of 22 students scored below 3 out of 5 points in this area. Last, while students were able to select a topic, they struggled to create meaningful content that aligned with the topic. Seven out of 22 students scored below 23 out of 30 points for content.

From the interviews, the researcher identified four key elements of difficulty in writing personal experience stories. The students reported that they faced challenges due to a lack of vocabulary, difficulty with sentence structure and punctuation, and struggles with word combination. Additionally, many students had trouble writing coherent sentences that matched the topics they had chosen. As a result, these issues led to errors in the vacation stories they wrote.

Discussion

Writing is the process of expressing information, ideas, opinions, or thoughts and feelings in written form (Tarigan, 2008). It involves several components that must be considered when students write, including content, rhetoric, vocabulary, grammatical structure, and writing mechanics, such as punctuation and capitalization (Anggraini, 2019). When students are asked to write based on their personal experiences, only some students are able to achieve good results. In this study, the researcher provided a vacation experience text as a reference to guide students in creating their own vacation stories. A total of 22 vacation story texts were analyzed, and an assessment rubric was used to evaluate students' writing abilities based on various writing indicators. According to Brown (2001), an analytical scoring rubric for writing includes five aspects: organization,

logical development of ideas (content), grammar, punctuation and spelling mechanics, and style or vocabulary.

First, the researcher evaluated the students' ability to write content. Content refers to how well students explain their vacation stories, ensuring they adhere to the topic and present a clear explanation so that readers can easily understand the meaning. The researcher found that half of the students demonstrated good writing skills, particularly in terms of content. Similar findings by Musyawir et al. (2020) suggest that when students connect their personal experiences to writing, they are more likely to produce engaging and meaningful content that resonates with readers.

The next aspect examined was organization. Organization involves the arrangement of sentences or paragraphs in a logical and coherent order. In this area, the researcher found that some students struggled with linking words together and using appropriate connecting words. This made it difficult for readers to understand the meaning of the stories. Research by Hinkel (2004) has emphasized that organizational skills are essential for students to produce cohesive writing. Without effective organization, students' writing may lack clarity, making it challenging for the reader to follow the narrative. To improve, students need more practice in connecting words and sentences to enhance the flow and coherence of their writing.

The researcher also assessed the students' grammar usage. Grammar is a crucial aspect of writing because errors can make the text unclear or alter its meaning. While some students were able to use grammar correctly without changing the meaning of their sentences, others made errors that led to confusion for the reader. According to Ly (2020), grammatical accuracy is a key factor in academic writing, as errors can obscure the writer's intended meaning. As a result, additional practice in grammar is necessary to ensure students can write clear and accurate sentences.

Next, the researcher evaluated the mechanical aspect of writing, which includes spelling, punctuation, and capitalization (Jacob, 2004). Correct mechanics help students effectively communicate their ideas and ensure that readers can easily follow the text. In this study, some students struggled with placing punctuation marks and capital letters correctly. As noted by Chandler (2003), poor mechanical skills can undermine the readability of writing, making it harder for readers to comprehend the intended message. Therefore, additional practice is required to help students improve their punctuation and capitalization skills.

Finally, the vocabulary aspect was assessed. A good vocabulary is essential for effective writing because it helps readers understand the meaning of the text. In this study, the researcher observed that many students had difficulty selecting appropriate vocabulary, which often left the reader confused about the meaning of the text. Research by Nation (2001) indicates that a limited vocabulary can hinder a student's ability to express ideas clearly in writing. To address this issue, students need more practice in vocabulary development to improve their ability to express themselves clearly in writing.

In conclusion, this study highlights the critical aspects of writing—content, organization, grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary—and emphasizes the need for targeted practice in these areas to improve students' overall writing skills. By addressing these challenges, students can enhance their ability to write coherent and meaningful stories, particularly those based on personal experiences.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion was inferred from the research. First, among the 22 students who completed the holiday story writing test, some were able to write stories well, while others struggled due to difficulty in writing. The researcher used an assessment rubric and interviews to evaluate students' ability to write holiday stories. Based on the five indicators of the rubric, the average score for all students was 81.31, indicating that their writing ability in holiday stories falls within the "good" category.

Second, some students had difficulty writing experience-based stories. Of the five aspects evaluated, four posed significant challenges for the students: grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, and content. These difficulties arose because students struggled with combining sentences effectively, lacked a strong vocabulary, were unable to apply punctuation marks and capitalization correctly, and found it challenging to clearly explain the meaning of their chosen topics. As a result, errors appeared in their writing.

The research suggests that eleventh-grade English teachers should focus on improving students' writing skills, particularly in crafting experiential stories. This could help students enhance their critical thinking skills, express their ideas more effectively in writing, and develop their ability to construct coherent narratives based on their imagination.

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