

## Difficulties In Teaching Writing Descriptive Text

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### Abstract

*When writing the descriptive text, the teachers found difficulties during the teaching process. This study aimed to determine teachers' difficulties in teaching and writing descriptive texts. The participants were English teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Palembang who taught seventh graders using total sampling. This study used a qualitative method. Interviews were used to collect the data. The data obtained from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The result of this study showed that (1) difficulties came from teachers themselves, such as difficulty in designing lesson plans and difficulty in utilizing learning media, (2) difficulties came from students, consisting of a lack of understanding about the generic structure of descriptive text, lack of understanding about mechanical aspect of writing, lack of grammar knowledge, and lack of about vocabularies knowledge, (3) difficulties came from learning environment, consists of difficult to control the large class and limited teaching time in the class*

**Keywords:** *Descriptive text, Teacher's difficulties, Teaching writing*

### 1. Introduction

Writing is one of the skills English language learners need to learn. Durga and Rao (2018) supported that, with good writing skills, one can express ideas and achieve their goals. This is also related to Khasanah's (2019) argument that English writing is necessary for academic and professional purposes. Learning how to organize ideas, build sentences, and arrange sentences into coherent paragraphs is an essential writing skill. This means that with writing, students can express many brilliant ideas. Thus, students must develop writing skills to bring many advantages and successes to their lives.

In terms of literacy rates, Indonesia rated 62 out of 70. This refers to White and Hall (2014), who said in their research that writing is often overlooked in the early grades, even though data show that many students struggle in this area. Consequently, writing becomes difficult for students to consider the most difficult and complex language skill. This makes students sometimes bored and lazy to improve their writing skills.

Another thing that makes students not want to write is that it takes a lot of attention to detail, like structure, word order, etc. However, the ability to write well is an important aspect of learning. Alviano et al. (2021) stated that writing is a process that is productive and has many steps. Susiyanti (2019) said that the success of teaching English in Indonesia could not be separated from

students' cultural backgrounds, values, customs, and beliefs, as well as the government's political stance on this foreign language. Teaching English has been a big task in places where English is not the first language. In conclusion, both developed and developing countries should realize that teaching and mastering English is essential.

Teaching writing skills is one of the hardest tasks for people who teach English as a second language. Also, it is difficult for learners to acquire a good deal of writing skills because spelling, grammar structure, usage, coherence, organization, and so on are all complicated. According to Rao (2019), teachers should know the level of their students and try to teach them in ways that will help them improve their writing skills. In addition, the tasks that the teacher chooses should be familiar to English learners in order to get them interested in English, especially writing.

Seventh graders learn about types of text, one of which is described as Descriptive Text. According to Suniaderi and Parmawati (2022), a text that describes something, place, or person is called a descriptive text. Details are usually sensory in nature and chosen to describe what the writer sees, hears smells, touches, and tastes. This means that the descriptive gives a clear picture of something experienced, such as a scene, person, or feeling and through.

Based on a preliminary study conducted by the researcher using interviews and observations made by a researcher with the teacher at SMP Negeri 2 Palembang,

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it was found that there were some difficulties in teaching descriptive texts. The teacher had limited time to explain the language features and generic structures of descriptive text because the students had four hours a week to study English. In addition, the teachers were overwhelmed in checking the results of writing descriptive text because of the limited vocabulary that the students had (P, Personal Communication, November 23rd, 2022). What the researcher did in this preliminary study was just some of the difficulties that arose; because of the phenomena above, the researcher wanted to find out more about the problems that arose there. The researcher asked only about things that were not detailed.

## 2. Method

In this study, a qualitative method was used. This research was conducted at SMP Negeri 2, Palembang, Jl. AKBP H. Moh Amin No. 42, 24 Ilir, Bukit Kecil, Palembang City, South Sumatra. There are five English teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Palembang, but the focus of this study was seventh grade teachers. A total sampling technique was used in this study. Thus, all the teachers who taught in seventh grade were included in the sample for this study.

In this study, teachers who taught seventh graders were interviewed about their difficulties in teaching descriptive texts. The researcher interviewed two English teachers at SMP Negeri 2, Palembang. The researcher chose to conduct semi-structured interviews to obtain in-depth information and use thematic analysis to determine what the data meant. The researcher used member checking to ensure that the study was accurate.

## 3. Results and Discussion

After analyzing the results of the research using thematic analysis, the researcher found that there were some teachers' difficulties in teaching descriptive texts. These are (1) difficulty in designing lesson plans, (2) difficulty in utilizing learning media, (3) lack of understanding of the generic structure of descriptive text, (4) lack of understanding of the mechanical aspect of writing, (5) lack of grammar knowledge, (6) lack of vocabulary knowledge, (7) difficulty in controlling the large class, and (8) limited teaching time in the class, as shown in Table 1.

**Tabel 1.** Themes, sub-themes, and codes for teachers' difficulties in teaching descriptive writing text

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes
Teachers difficulties came from teachers themselves	Difficult to Design Lesson Plan	1. The teachers had difficulties in determining appropriate teaching methods for inactive class in design lesson plan

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes
		2. The teachers had difficulties in determining time allotment in design lesson plan
	Difficult to Utilize Learning Media	1. The teachers faced difficulties in using electronic learning media like projector
Teachers difficulties came from students	Lack of Understanding about Generic Structure of Descriptive Text	1. Students had difficulties in developing ideas in writing descriptive texts. 2. Students had difficulties in organizing idea in writing descriptive text
	Lack of Understanding about Mechanical Aspect of Writing	1. Students made mistake in using capitalization in the sentences of descriptive text 2. Students made mistake in using punctuation in the sentences of descriptive text
	Lack of Grammar Knowledge	1. Students had difficulties in using Simple Present Tense 2. Students had difficulties in using Possessive Adjective
	Lack of Vocabularies Knowledge	1. Students made errors in the used of action verb 2. Students difficulties to use appropriate adjective. 3. Students difficulties to use appropriate noun.
Teachers difficulties came from learning environment	Difficult to Control the Large Class	1. The teachers had difficulties in getting student attention 2. The teachers had difficulties to monitoring of students' learning
	Limited Teaching Time in the Class	1. The teachers had difficulties to convey the material properly 2. The teachers had difficulties to assess

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes
		student work and see whether all students understand the material provided.

First, teachers' difficulties in teaching writing were difficult to design. This research implies that the most difficult task in designing a lesson plan is determining the teaching method for inactive classes and the time allocation in the lesson plan. Srihidayati et al (2015) study showed that it's hard for teachers to come up with ways to teach when they're making a lesson plan. In particular, it is difficult for them to choose techniques and ways to teach that match their learning tools and basic skills. This problem is supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture (2013), which said that "teaching methods used by teachers should develop the learning process to help students develop basic skills that are right for them." Therefore, creating a lesson plan is very important because it will help teachers improve their teaching skills. Findings from Srihidayati et al. (2015) also show that it can be difficult for some teachers to determine how much time to provide each learning task when making lesson plans. This is because there was only a certain amount of time per week for English. Teachers also believe that their plans for how to use their time do not always match what is going on in the classroom. Azka (2014) stated that when teachers decide how to divide their time, they should do so based on how much learning is done and how well basic skills are learned. Teachers should effectively formulate time allocation when designing lesson plans in descriptive texts. In addition, teachers should change the lesson plan for the class so that it is not done much. In addition, time is the hardest part of designing a lesson plan.

Second, difficulties in utilizing learning media arose from the teachers themselves. Many teachers had difficulty utilizing learning media in the classroom, even though the school has provided facilities for teachers to teach descriptive texts, especially the Proyektor. This research establishes that teachers do not understand how to use the Proyektor, so they rarely do so. According to Sukmahidayati (2015), Many English teachers in Indonesia have difficulty utilizing instructional media in their classrooms. This difficulty was caused by the fact that good media are expensive. In addition, Aini (2013) stated that teachers are also expected to learn by utilizing high-tech instructional media in order to explore them to enhance the quality of instruction. According to Resti & Rachmijati (2020) with the use of media in the classroom students become more interested in learning and more focused attention on the teacher. Thus, in teaching writing, descriptive text teachers still had difficulty utilizing learning media in the classroom, even though the school has provided facilities for teachers.

Third, the difficulties faced by teachers in teaching writing descriptive texts at SMP Negeri 2 Palembang came from the students. The results of the study showed that the students lacked an understanding of the generic structure of descriptive texts, such as developing ideas and organizing ideas. Based on this study, students still have trouble coming up with ideas for detailed texts, because they have never been taught how to write them. Amalia et al. (2022) said that when students learn how to write detailed texts, they are often told to write about something they are interested in. Students have to choose the ideas they want to use to write a creative description. One of the most important aspects of writing is the development of ideas. Without thought, the students cannot start writing because they do not know what to write about. Based on research by Astrianingsih (2021), students have trouble putting sentences in the opening, body, and conclusion of a descriptive text in the right order. In conclusion, students lack an understanding of descriptive text, such as developing ideas, organizing ideas, and using mechanical aspects when writing descriptive text.

Fourth, the difficulties faced by teachers in teaching writing descriptive texts at SMP Negeri 2 Palembang came from the students. The results of the study showed that the students lacked understanding of the mechanical aspects of writing, such as unction, capitalization, and spelling. Based on the findings of Pratiwi (2016), students have trouble with language, but do not have problems with their minds because there are no mistakes in the topic or organization. In this research, it was said, as in Novita (2017), that students have trouble making lines and writing words with the correct spelling. Aziza (2022) also mentioned that difficulties in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization can affect the meaning of a sentence in a paragraph. If this occurs, the reader will not understand what the sentence or paragraph is trying to say. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to spelling, punctuation, and capitalization in a sentence or phrase so that the sentence is easy to read and does not lose meaning.

The fifth, the difficulties faced by teachers in teaching writing descriptive text at SMP Negeri 2 Palembang came from the students. The result of the study showed that the student's lack of grammar knowledge. Students had difficulties in using Simple Present Tense and Possessive adjectives. In line with this Bulqiyah et al., (2021) find that more than half of students claim grammar as the main problem for students in writing English. In line same like Yulanda (2022) the result of her research is that students more often write grammatical errors that cause students' difficulties. Not being able to put together sentences well and using the wrong words and "to be". Furthermore, the difficulty of sentence structure as part of the grammatical aspect is also found in most students' work. In a study conducted by Firdaus et al (2022), it was found that

students encountered difficulties in writing because they could not distinguish the usage of 'possessive adjectives. Another reason is that the structures of Bahasa Indonesia and the English language are not similar. The students were frequently confused about how to use the possessive adjectives and the possessive pronouns and were not able to complete their grammar tasks as a result of many errors. In short, the lack of grammar knowledge from students made the teachers difficulties in teaching descriptive text.

The sixth, the difficulties faced by teachers in teaching writing descriptive text at SMP Negeri 2 Palembang came from the students. It was a lack of vocabulary knowledge from students. Students made errors in the use of action verbs, difficulties in using appropriate adjectives, and difficulties in using appropriate nouns. The findings above are the result of Tasnim (2023) most students do not understand the word because they do not have a big enough vocabulary and do not know how to write a descriptive piece. So, their limited knowledge also makes it hard for them to put words together in a sentence or paragraph. The results of this study show that students do not have a hard time writing detailed texts. Toba & Noor (2019) find out that Students have trouble with vocabulary because their knowledge of words can quickly disappear when they write. Thus, the lack of vocabulary from students made the teachers difficulties in teaching descriptive text.

The seventh, difficulty faced by the English teachers in teaching writing the descriptive text was having difficulties in controlling the large class. It came from the learning environment when teaching descriptive text. This research revealed that teachers have difficulties in controlling the large class such as difficulties in getting students' attention and monitoring of students' learning. Based on an article by Locastro, 1989 (as cited by Raizen, 2010) the article posited that students liked classes with 10–20 people. They also said that a class with 7 people or less is too small, and a class with 4 or less is impossible. It is supported by Marzulina et al (2021) when there are too many students in a classroom, the teacher often has trouble giving each student the time they need, giving students enough chances to speak, and giving enough feedback on students' written work. According to Trang (2015), It is hard to learn in an atmosphere that makes you feel uncomfortable, and it is hard to handle a big class of mixed students. Haddad (2015) claims that teachers should move around the classroom to bring students closer together and help them learn. According to Vaccaro and Sabella (2018) mentioned that "monitoring each student's learning can be a challenge. It is easy for a teacher to ask the whole group a question, but doing so is not an effective strategy to determine individual student's progress". Meanwhile, in the seventh-grade class at SMP Negeri 2 Palembang, there are 30-32 students in

class which means it is not an ideal class for teaching writing descriptive text. It is difficult for teachers to manage overcrowded classes and hard to get their attention.

The last of the difficulties faced by teachers in teaching writing descriptive text was limited teaching time. It came from the learning environment in the class. The result of the study showed that the teachers had difficulties conveying the material properly and had difficulties assessing student work and seeing whether all students understood the material provided. It is supported by Adam et al (2021) teaching time is how much time the teacher and students need in the classroom for teaching and learning tasks. The time allotted must be enough for the teacher to do tasks well, which is hard for the teacher to do because there are so many things the teacher needs to think about. As Nguyen et al (2014) claimed, before the students did the practice, the teacher had to tell them what time it was. By doing this, the teachers could get the kids to pay more attention or move faster so they could finish their work on time. It related to what the teachers said in a week, English lessons are only one meeting and only 2 hours long. It means teachers need more time to teach writing descriptive text.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Based on the results of the interviews, it was found that there were difficulties faced by teachers in teaching writing descriptive text. They were divided into some items such as the teacher themselves, from students, and the learning environment. The difficulties come from teachers themselves such as 1). Difficult to design lesson plans, such as the difficulty of design plan in determining the teaching method and determining proper time allocation for learning 2). Difficult to utilize instructional media such as difficulties using electronic learning media like projector in the school.

Teachers' difficulties come from students: 3) Lack of understanding about the generic structure of descriptive text such as: about developing ideas and organizing ideas in writing descriptive text. 4) Lack of understanding of mechanical aspects of writing such as difficulties in the mechanical aspect of writing for example capitalization and punctuation. 5) Lack of grammar knowledge. Students had difficulties in using simple present tense and possessive adjectives, 6) Lack of vocabulary knowledge, students made an error in using action verbs, and difficulties in using appropriate adjectives and nouns.

Teachers' difficulties come from learning environments such as 7) Difficulty in controlling a large class such as difficulties in getting student attention and difficulties in monitoring students' learning. 8) Limited teaching time in the class such as difficulties in conveying the material properly and difficulties in assessing student

work and seeing whether all students understand the material provided.

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