

# UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS' CHALLENGES IN WRITING RECOUNT PARAGRAPHS: A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

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**ABSTRACT:** The objectives of this study were to analyze the students' ability to construct recount paragraph structures and identify the challenges they faced during the writing process. The research focused on one class (XI IPA 2) at SMAN 1 Teunom, Aceh Jaya, consisting of 22 students. A quasi-experiment was employed in this study, with data collected through a writing test and a questionnaire. The findings revealed that most students demonstrated a good level of proficiency in writing recount paragraphs. Specifically, 59.09% of the students excelled in organizing their ideas, 63.63% showed a solid grasp of vocabulary, nouns, verbs, and adjectives, 63.63% were proficient in applying grammatical rules, and 54.54% performed well in the mechanics of writing recount paragraphs. However, students faced challenges in understanding and organizing ideas, mastering grammatical rules, and expanding their vocabulary. Based on these findings, it is recommended that second-grade students at SMAN 1 Teunom receive additional instruction and practice in writing recount paragraph structures to enhance their skills further.

**Keywords:** Quasi-experiment, recount paragraph, students' challenges, writing

## INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the essential skills in English, especially within the context of teaching and learning activities. It reflects pupils' language strengths and is a crucial part of language development (Muntazar & Hajar, 2025). In school curricula, language skills are divided into four primary aspects: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Amin (2023) mentioned that writing has been recognized as a fundamental skill, especially in today's world, where communication heavily relies on written text. As society becomes increasingly dependent on textual information, the ability to express thoughts, ideas, and knowledge effectively through writing has become more crucial than ever.

The ability to write involves generating ideas and expressing them in written form, which many students still find challenging. Word choice and grammatical accuracy were identified as the most difficult areas, along with

challenges related to limited time for developing writing skills. Based on the research findings, several suggestions have been put forward to strengthen undergraduate students' writing abilities. These include allocating additional time for writing lessons, increasing awareness of key writing components, conducting frequent evaluations to track progress, and potentially incorporating a specialized reading program. Adopting adaptable teaching strategies and promoting various writing activities outside the classroom are essential for enhancing students' overall language competence (Taye & Mengesha, 2024).

Writing in English is widely regarded as one of the most challenging skills to acquire. Most research findings indicated that students' greatest difficulties stemmed from a limited understanding of vocabulary and language usage. They believed that their restricted knowledge hindered their ability to construct grammatically correct

sentences, and their inadequate vocabulary made it difficult for them to select appropriate words. Additionally, many students lacked enthusiasm for learning English, which further contributed to their struggles in developing writing skills.

Observations indicated that students often struggle with effectively organizing ideas in English writing, particularly in recount texts. Many face challenges in constructing sentences due to a lack of vocabulary, as well as limited understanding of content, structure, and grammatical accuracy. Certain students struggled with composing a thesis statement in the introduction section, primarily due to their level of English proficiency. They encountered difficulties in using the language effectively, as their command of English was still weak and restricted, making it challenging for them to construct clear and well-structured statements (Helmanda et al., 2022).

Furthermore, current teaching strategies do not sufficiently motivate students to develop their writing skills, leading to a lack of interest in learning recount text composition. Enhancing language skills requires motivation and effort, and it's crucial to assess the situation in formal or non-formal learning institutions to support language learning (Nassriati & Hajar, 2024). To achieve this goal, various forms of learning can be used to improve students' overall performance, as well as their language skills (Muslem et al., 2019). To encourage good attitudes and passion among students, teachers' roles and functions need to be strengthened (Hajar et al., 2024).

Addressing these challenges, innovative teaching approaches that engage students and enhance their ability to write recount texts accurately and confidently are required. To fulfill the need, the writer wanted to find out how proficient the students of SMA Negeri 1 Teunom, Aceh Jaya in composing recount paragraphs and what

challenges the students of SMA Negeri 1 Teunom, Aceh Jaya, encounter when writing recount paragraphs.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Writing is a fundamental ability that enables individuals to convey ideas, thoughts, knowledge, and life experiences through clear and structured language (Baresh, 2022). It allows readers to comprehend the intended message effectively. As stated by Morin et al (2018), writing involves inscribing graphic symbols that represent a language understood by others, which are then read and interpreted. This process underscores writing as a means of arranging graphic symbols into a coherent linguistic form that communicates meaning. It is the process of producing graphic symbols that convey a language comprehensible to others. These symbols are then read and interpreted to extract meaning. This highlights writing as an essential tool for organizing symbols systematically to form a structured and meaningful linguistic expression, enabling effective communication.

Moreover, Suseno and Nurharjanti (2015) emphasize that writing is a skill requiring the organization of letters, words, sentences, and paragraphs to deliver messages or information indirectly. This process demands careful attention to various aspects, including content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling.

As a distinct form of communication, writing plays a critical role in language development. Unlike verbal communication, it relies heavily on precision and clarity to convey meaning. Through writing exercises, students are trained to express their ideas in a structured and coherent

manner (Abduvalieva, 2024). They are encouraged to use accurate diction, appropriate grammatical structures, and a clear context, ensuring that their written communication is both impactful and well-organized.

Furthermore, Alsaawi (2019) describes writing as a process of communication that differs from spoken interaction. It involves generating and organizing ideas for effective delivery. While spoken communication benefits from elements such as intonation, facial expressions, and physical gestures, written communication depends on explanatory tools, such as proper spelling and punctuation, to clearly convey meaning. Writing also serves as a medium for expressing ideas to an audience separated by time, distance, or place.

Given its significance, writing requires deliberate guidance and practice. Kharel (2023) delivered that teachers play an indispensable role in nurturing students' writing skills, particularly during their formative years. By training students to write effectively before advancing to higher levels of education, educators help lay the foundation for strong written communication.

The primary goal of teaching writing is to equip students with the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively convey their thoughts, emotions, ideas, desires, and experiences to a broad audience. Writing instruction enhances students' ability to articulate their reasoning, imagination, and awareness of societal, cultural, and environmental issues. This holistic approach not only improves their writing but also fosters their ability to engage in meaningful communication.

In the context of recount texts, Rozimela (2017) defines this genre as a narrative that guides readers or listeners through a series of past events. Recount texts commonly describe occurrences such as reports of heavy rainfall, regional flooding, or significant historical events, such as the struggles of national heroes. These texts are structured to present events sequentially, incorporating clear time references to ensure coherence. Recount texts are typically taught at the junior high school level and serve the dual purpose of informing and entertaining. They rely on past-tense language to narrate personal or historical experiences in a detailed and organized manner.

Sartika et.al. (2022) showed the test results of their research, revealing that the majority of students struggled with writing recount texts. Many demonstrated significant difficulties in developing content, structuring their writing coherently, and selecting appropriate vocabulary. Grammar was particularly challenging, with a considerable number of students making frequent errors, which affected the clarity and accuracy of their writing. Additionally, issues related to mechanics, such as spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, further hindered their ability to produce well-organized recount texts.

One of the primary reasons for these difficulties was a limited understanding of grammatical rules and sentence construction within the context of recount writing. This struggle was largely attributed to a lack of familiarity with recount text conventions and insufficient practice in writing. Without regular exposure and reinforcement, students found it difficult to apply proper

grammatical structures, organize their ideas effectively, and express their thoughts clearly. As a result, their recount texts often lacked coherence and accuracy, highlighting the need for additional support and structured writing exercises to enhance their skills.

Moreover, Syafitri et al. (2023) claimed that most students struggled to understand how to effectively use language in recount texts, which contributed to their difficulties. Their lack of familiarity with the structure and features of recount writing made it challenging for them to convey ideas clearly and coherently. Additionally, their limited experience and insufficient knowledge in composing recount texts further hindered their ability to produce well-structured and grammatically accurate writing. Without adequate practice and exposure, they faced obstacles in organizing their thoughts, applying appropriate vocabulary, and using correct grammar within their texts.

To sum up, writing serves as an important means of communication that allows people to share their thoughts, ideas, and experiences in an organized and purposeful manner. Unlike spoken communication, writing depends on accurate word choice, correct grammar, punctuation, and structure to deliver messages clearly across time and space. As a key skill for both personal growth and career advancement, writing demands regular practice and support. Educators hold a significant responsibility in nurturing students' writing skills from an early age by providing them with the necessary tools to express themselves effectively in written form. By recognizing students' difficulties and highlighting the value of writing, teachers can help learners build

the confidence and ability to thrive in academic settings and beyond.

When writing on each of the generic structure patterns of recount texts, Orientation, Events, and Re-orientation, many student faults are discovered in this instance. Students' sentence-writing skills vary from person to person, and some struggle with grammar. To solve these issues and enable them to produce recount narratives correctly, a solution is required. Thus, in this instance, the researcher is more concerned with identifying verb usage mistakes in student accounts of holidays. Moreover, Isaacson (2004) highlights that difficulties with mechanical aspects of writing, such as spelling and punctuation, can hinder students' ability to focus on content generation, leading to frustration and reduced writing output.

Students run into a few issues when creating recall texts. They have trouble developing their thoughts and putting them in coherent sentences. Additionally, a lot of kids lack vocabulary and grammar expertise, which causes their writing to have certain errors. Lack of language usage and vocabulary proficiency are the biggest issues. The students felt puzzled when picking words because they believed they lacked vocabulary mastery and had little knowledge of how to form sentences grammatically (Alisha et al., n.d.). In addition, they struggled with spelling. They frequently hesitated while writing English words and thought their spelling was inadequate.

## **METHOD**

This study adopts a quasi-experimental research approach to examine the nature of students' misconceptions in writing recount texts and to identify the

challenges they face in the writing process. The research utilized purposive sampling as the method for selecting participants. Specifically, the sample comprised second-grade students from SMA Negeri 1 Teunom during the 2020/2021 academic year (Arikunto, 2013). A total of 22 students from Class XII IPA 1 were selected as the respondents for this study. This particular class was chosen because the students were identified as having limited proficiency in English, especially in writing English texts.

To achieve the research objectives, the writer analyzed the students' assignments, focusing on the composition of recount paragraphs. This method proved effective in gaining insights into the specific obstacles students encountered when composing structured recount paragraphs. Additionally, to address the second research question, the writer administered a questionnaire to the students. This approach provided further data on the challenges faced by the learners and offered a deeper understanding of their difficulties in writing recount texts.

The researcher implemented a document study to examine students' work related to composing and the challenge of recount paragraphs. This technique proved beneficial in gaining deeper insights into the difficulties students encountered while composing well-structured recount paragraphs. By utilizing this method, the researcher was able to identify specific challenges students faced, such as organizing ideas, applying grammatical rules, and using appropriate vocabulary. Through this analysis, a clearer understanding of students' writing struggles was achieved,

allowing for more effective strategies to support their learning process.

The researcher also administered a questionnaire to the students. This questionnaire served as a method for gathering information by presenting a series of inquiries or written declarations for the participants to respond to. The questionnaire was structured with predetermined responses, requiring individuals to answer independently. In this study, a closed-ended questionnaire format was utilized. The evaluation employed a Likert scale as its measurement approach. The questionnaire contained approximately ten items, each offering four response options: strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (DS), and strongly disagree (SDS).

## **FINDINGS**

The questionnaires were distributed to assess students' proficiency in composing recount paragraphs and identify challenges they face in writing recount texts. The research involved 22 second-grade students from SMA Negeri 1 Teunom. The findings include the following;

### **Students' Proficiency in Writing Recount Paragraphs**

To answer the research question concerning the students' level of proficiency in writing recount paragraphs, the analysis focused on their performance in a structured writing test. The results show that the overall proficiency of the students is at a basic to intermediate level. While a small number of students were able to produce well-structured recounts with clear orientation, logical sequencing of events, and proper use of past tense, the majority demonstrated limited

control over essential writing components. Common weaknesses included fragmented ideas, inconsistent verb tenses, poor organization, and a lack of vocabulary variety. These findings suggest that although students are familiar with the recount genre, many still require guidance and practice to improve their structural accuracy and language use in order to reach a higher level of writing proficiency. There are:

#### 1. Ability to Organize Paragraphs

Students demonstrated varying levels of proficiency in organizing their recount paragraphs. Most students structured their writing by arranging ideas based on personal familiarity and adhering to the standard format of a recount text, which includes orientation, events, and a conclusion. The assessment results showed that 22.7% of students performed excellently in organizing their paragraphs, displaying a strong ability to logically sequence their ideas. A majority, 59.09%, achieved a good level, indicating that they could effectively structure their paragraphs with minor inconsistencies. Meanwhile, 18.1% of students were categorized as average, meaning they faced some difficulties in maintaining a coherent flow of ideas. Notably, none of the students fell into the poor category, suggesting that all students had at least a basic understanding of paragraph organization in recount writing. These findings highlight the general competence of students in structuring their recount paragraphs while also indicating areas for potential improvement.

#### 2. Use of Vocabulary, Nouns, Verbs, and Adjectives

Students primarily relied on common words and familiar sentence structures when constructing their recount paragraphs. Their ability to use appropriate vocabulary, including nouns, verbs, and adjectives, varied in proficiency. The assessment results indicated that 31.81% of students demonstrated excellent vocabulary use, effectively incorporating a range of descriptive and precise words in their writing. A majority, 63.63%, exhibited good proficiency, showing a solid understanding of word choice while occasionally relying on simpler vocabulary. Meanwhile, 4.54% of students were categorized as average, meaning they faced some challenges in selecting varied and suitable words for their recounts. Notably, no students were classified in the poor category, indicating that all students possessed at least a foundational ability to use vocabulary appropriately. These findings suggest that while most students have a strong grasp of vocabulary usage in recount writing, further encouragement in expanding their word choices could enhance their overall writing quality.

#### 3. Grammar Usage

Students' proficiency in grammar usage varied, reflecting different levels of mastery in applying grammatical rules accurately. The assessment results showed that 27.27% of students excelled in grammar, demonstrating a strong command of sentence structure, verb tense consistency, and subject-verb agreement. A majority, 63.63%, were categorized at a good level, indicating that while their grammar was generally correct, minor errors occasionally appeared in their writing. Meanwhile, 9.09% of students were

classified as average, meaning they encountered some difficulties in maintaining grammatical accuracy, which may have affected the clarity of their recount paragraphs. Notably, no students fell into the poor category, suggesting that all had at least a functional understanding of grammar. These results highlight the need for continued reinforcement of grammar skills to enhance students' accuracy and fluency in writing.

#### 4. Mechanics (Spelling, Punctuation, and Capitalization)

Students exhibited different levels of proficiency in applying writing conventions such as spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. The assessment results revealed that 45.54% of students achieved an excellent rating, meaning they consistently applied proper mechanics with minimal to no errors. Additionally, 54.54% performed well, indicating a strong understanding of spelling and punctuation rules, though occasional mistakes were present. Notably, none of the students fell into the average or poor categories, showing that all had a solid grasp of fundamental writing mechanics. These findings suggest that students generally possess strong technical writing skills, yet continued practice can further refine their accuracy and consistency in applying mechanical conventions.

### **The Challenges Faced by Students**

To address the research question regarding the challenges faced by the students of SMA Negeri 1 Teunom, Aceh Jaya, in writing recount paragraphs, data were gathered through questionnaires and an analysis of students' writing test results. The

findings reveal that students encounter several difficulties related to both the content and structure of their writing. These challenges include problems in organizing ideas chronologically, using appropriate language features, and constructing grammatically correct sentences. The results also indicate that many students struggle with limited vocabulary, improper use of past tense, and the absence of key elements such as orientation and reorientation. These issues reflect a broader need for improved instruction and practice in recount writing, especially in developing students' ability to express past events clearly and cohesively. There are:

#### 1. Comprehending paragraph

Most of students (63.6%) concur that they initially had some trouble understanding the English writing recount paragraph content. However, 36.4% of students don't agree with this assertion. When they initially started writing recount paragraphs in English, they had no trouble understanding the content. It can be concluded that the majority of them initially encountered some challenges when they were required to learn the structure of English narrative paragraphs.

#### 2. Coming up with ideas

Most of students (63.6%) agreed with the statement that they had some difficulty coming up with a concept when writing an English recount paragraph, while 4.5% of students strongly agreed. Conversely, 31.8% of students said they had no issue coming up with the idea and putting it down. They may find it simple to understand yet challenging to translate into English.

#### 3. Organizing the idea

Students indicated that they had some difficulty organizing their ideas when writing an English recount paragraph,

with 4.5% strongly agreeing and another 54.5% agreeing. In contrast, 36.4% of students disagree with the aforementioned statement, and 4.5% strongly disagree. They may find organizing the idea in writing to be simple. In general, the student encountered some difficulties organizing the idea in the English recount paragraph. Due to their limited vocabulary, some possibilities made it difficult.

#### 4. Grammatical structure

Students mentioned that they had some issues with the grammatical structure of their English recount paragraphs, with 13.6% strongly agreeing and another 45.45% agreeing. Conversely, 36.4% of students disagree with the aforementioned assertion, and 4.5% strongly disagree. It's possible that they were sufficiently proficient in writing grammar. Overall, the student received some credit for using proper grammar when creating an English recall paragraph.

#### 5. Lack of vocabulary

While only 4.5% of students disagree with the statement above, 22.7% strongly agree and another 72.2% agree that the student has some vocabulary issues when writing an English recount paragraph. Based on the results above, it is appropriate to say that the student finds it difficult to organize the ideas to construct the recount paragraph.

#### 6. Punctuation and capitalization

A further 40.9% of students agreed with the statement, while 9.1% strongly agreed. When writing a recall paragraph in English, the student had some issues with spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Conversely, 45.5% of students disagree with the aforementioned assertion, and just 4.5% strongly disagree. The aforementioned result also supports assertion 5, which

states that students struggle to organize their thoughts to create a coherent paragraph. Although the student struggled with spelling, grammar, and capitalization, it could motivate them to acquire the fundamentals of writing in English.

#### 7. Duration

While 59.1% of students disagree with the statement, 4.5% strongly agree and another 36.4% agree that students need a lot of time to understand the English writing recount paragraph. Based on the results above, the majority of students did not require much time to understand the English writing recount paragraph, which may support statement 7 that the material of the recount paragraph taught is closed to their environment and daily activity.

### DISCUSSION

The study's findings indicate that the majority of students had good proficiency in writing recount paragraph structures, with 59.09% of them being good at organizing, 63.63% using vocabulary, nouns, verbs, and adjectives, 63.63% using grammar rules, and 54.54% using the mechanism of writing recount paragraph structure. Additionally, the students' inability to comprehend, acquire, and organize the idea, as well as their lack of vocabulary and knowledge of grammar norms, were the main challenges they had when composing recount paragraph structures. According to the research's findings, it is recommended that SMAN 1 Teunom, Aceh Jaya second graders receive further instruction and practice in writing recount paragraph structures.

The author elucidated the findings of the first research question, which asked how well the students at SMA Negeri 1 Teunom were able to compose



recount paragraphs, and came to the conclusion that the students' proficiency in this area was adequate. According to the test results above, a large number of pupils were able to construct the recount paragraph structure. This finding is in line with most students being able to apply the generic structure of recount paragraphs, which typically includes orientation, events, and re-orientation (Alazar, 2015).

The second research question asked what the students' biggest challenges were when writing a recount paragraph structure, and it was found that the students' biggest challenge was using the mechanism of writing a recount paragraph structure. The challenge was organizing the idea in the text, and the other was that the students needed to practice writing a recount paragraph structure.

## CONCLUSION

The findings demonstrated that the majority of students had good proficiency in writing recount paragraph structures, with 59.09% of them being proficient in organizing, 63.63% using vocabulary, nouns, verbs, and adjectives, 63.63% applying grammar rules, and 54.54% utilizing the mechanism of writing recount paragraph structures.

The majority of students react favourably to the paragraph pattern used in recall writing. However, the students' inability to comprehend, acquire, and organize the idea, as well as their lack of vocabulary and knowledge of grammar rules, were the main challenges they faced when constructing recount paragraph structures.

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