# An Analysis of Writing Problems in Descriptive Texts Faced by Third-Semester Students in The English Education Study Program at PSDKU Aru, Pattimura University

**Ferdinan Laelaem**<sup>1</sup> Pattimura University, Indonesia

# Felicia M. Lekatompessy<sup>2</sup>

\*Corresponding E-mail: <u>felicialeca@yahoo.com</u> Pattimura University, Indonesia

# Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify students' challenges in writing descriptive texts in English. The research design employed in this study was a qualitative method. The population consisted of nine third-semester students from the English Education program at Pattimura University, PSDKU Aru. The instruments used in this study were a writing test and interviews. For data analysis, the study utilized the formula from Annasudjono (2010): F/N×100%, while qualitative data analysis followed the framework of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The results revealed that students faced significant challenges in writing descriptive texts in English, particularly in the areas of organization, mechanics, vocabulary, and language use. The study concluded that the researcher identified recurring problems in writing descriptive texts of content, organization, mechanics, vocabulary, and language use.

Keywords: students' problems, Descriptive text

DOI: 10.30598/matail.v5i1.16403

# **INTRODUCTION**

Writing is one of the language skills in learning English that students must master, despite its perceived difficulty. Researchers focus on writing because this is a fundamental skill that allows students communicate effectively with people. Writing conveys information, suggest ideas, and engage in meaningful conversations. While other skills are also important, such as speaking, listening, writing plays an important role in facilitating clear and concise communication in written form. In addition, the writing allows me to provide detailed.

According to Sharples, as cited by Isna W. in 2019, writing is an opportunity. It allows students to express something about themselves, explore, and explain their ideas. Writing encourages critical thinking and analytical skills. When learners write, they are required to organize their thoughts, analyze information, and present arguments cohesively. This process enhances their cognitive abilities and fosters a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Writing provides a platform for self-expression and self-reflection. Through writing, learners can articulate their feelings, experiences, and perspectives, fostering self-awareness and personal growth. It enables individuals to express themselves authentically and develop their writing skill. well-structured responses to your inquiries, improve the overall user experience.

Imane at. Al. (2022) in Brown Argued that the writing process involves several stages: prewriting, drafting, revision, editing, and proofreading. Pre-writing includes brainstorming and organizing thoughts. Drafting focuses on putting ideas into words. Revision involves reviewing and refining content. Editing corrects errors in grammar and punctuation. Proofreading is the final step to check for remaining errors before submission or publication.

Writing is described as a form of problem-solving by Alves (2019), involving processes such as identifying the purpose and problem, planning and organizing the content, generating ideas and solutions, evaluating and selecting relevant ones, implementing and revising the writing iteratively, and reflecting on the process for learning and improvement. These steps help writers address challenges effectively, improve writing skills, and enhance problem-solving abilities for future writing tasks.

According to Safitry in Tarigan (2023), a descriptive text is a type of text that aims to immerse the reader in the writer's world, enabling them to feel, enjoy, and understand the writer's intended subject. In the book 'College Academic Writing: A Genre-Based Approach' by Dr. Wy. Dirgeyasa, M. Hum (2017), Learning a descriptive text is essential for students because it helps develop students' writing skills. The descriptive text of focus clearly describes a person, place, object, or event through detailed descriptions, sensory language, and image.

Based on the phenomena and problems in writing descriptive text, the researcher is interested in conducting research to determine the problems that make third-semester students of the English Education study program at the paragraph writing class struggle in writing descriptive text. Researchers are interested in identifying the challenges found in the third semester student in writing descriptive text. By knowing these challenges then the research wants to make it into writing in this study. And the results of this study can help the next research.

This research was conducted at Pattimura University PSDKU ARU with students from the English Education study program in their third semester. The interview was used as an instrument to gather the opinions of the students regarding the problems they face in writing descriptive text.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

## Writing in English as foreign language (EFL) context

Rinnert and Khobayashi (2023) argued that ability to write allows a person to communicate clearly and effectively through written text. In the EFL context, this is important because often students have to communicate with native English speakers by letters, emails, or other written messages. Writing helps students to strengthen their understanding of grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure in English. By regularly writing, students can improve their language skills thoroughly. Writing enables students to express their ideas, opinions, and feelings clearly and organizationally. This helps in developing critical and analytical thinking ability. Writing skills also enable students to develop their creativity through story writing, poetry, essays, and other writing. It helps to enhance the student's imagination and creative expression. Thus, writing skills are considered important in the EFL context because it provides the benefits of communication, language development, self-expression, and creativity for students in learning English as a foreign language.

Another opinion from Mahfuzah (2021) in Nunan states that writing is an intellectual activity that involves finding ideas and thinking about how to express and organize them into clear statements and paragraphs. This suggests that writers are required to express their thoughts and organize them into well-composed compositions. Writing presents the writer's

concept and understanding of a given issue, requiring systematic integration of ideas. It is defines writing as a process of constructing meaning through written language, involving the interaction of cognitive, linguistic, and social processes. He emphasizes the dynamic nature of writing as a creative and communicative activity that reflects individual perspectives and experiences. the key components of writing as purpose, audience, content, organization, style, and mechanics. He stresses the importance of writers understanding their writing goals, addressing the needs of their audience, developing clear and coherent content, structuring their texts effectively, adopting an appropriate writing style, and adhering to language conventions.

In writing, the writer has the purpose of conveying messages and information to the reader. Regardless of the type of writing, it must have specific goals and objectives. This can be achieved by choosing the correct words and using corresponding sentence structures to effectively convey the intended meaning. The purpose of writing determines the appropriate format and structure chosen for the piece.

According to Titus in Tarigan (2023), the broad purposes of writing are to inform, reassure, exhort, convince, and express to the readers can be summarized as follows:

- 1. To inform: the writer informs the reader about experiences, feelings, imagination, and intuition.
- 2. To direct: the writer provides written instruction and direction to guide the reader's to understanding.
- 3. To explain: the reader explains various topic and concepts to help reader understand.
- 4. To convince: the shares information that is convincing and trustworthy to the reader.
- 5. To summarize: the reader provides concise information a short passage to facilitate the reader' understanding.

There are several internal problems in students writing descriptive text:

a. Grammatical problems

Article by Nilam (2021) in Kharma states that students have grammatical problems with subject verb agreements, pronoun references, and connectors.

b. Problems of word choice

Writing in a second language using the appropriate words in the appropriate place is a problem for students. The effort to impress the reader leads to a problem of diction.

- c. Cognitive problems
- a) Punctuation problems

According to Younes in Byrne (2020), the fact that punctuation has never been standard to the extent as spelling, makes it is problematic.

b) Capitalization problems

Capital letters are useful for sentence initials, the beginning of important words, in topics, headings. The problems occur because the difficulty to classify nouns as proper and common nouns (Utari 2022 in Gowere et al.).

c) Content problems

Learners of English as a second or foreign language also face problems of exploring ideas and thought to communicate with others.

d) Problems organization

Learners have the problem of structuring the paragraph, topic development of a paragraph, structuring the whole discourse and a theme in a discourse, differentiating a topic and supporting ideas or generalizations and specific details.

## **Descriptive Text**

Spainni and Sukardi (2016), the purpose of descriptive text is to vividly depict a person, place, object, or event by appealing to the reader's senses and imagination. The primary purpose of descriptive text is to paint a vivid and detailed picture in the reader's mind by using sensory

language, precise details, and imagery. Descriptive texts aim to evoke emotions, sensations, and moods in the reader by appealing to their senses and creating a sensory experience through language. and by providing rich and immersive descriptions, descriptive texts seek to engage the reader's imagination and draw them into the world being portrayed.

- 1. Specific participant: has a certain object, is not common and unique (only one). for example: Papaliseran beach, my house, Cendrawasih temple, uncle Onald.
- 2. The use of the adjective (an adjective) to clarify the noun, for example: a beautiful beach, a handsome man, the famous place in Dobo city, etc.
- 3. The use of simple present tense: The sentence pattern used is simple present because it tells the fact of the object described.
- 4. Action verb: verbs that show an activity (for example, run, sleep, walk, cut etc.)

When writing descriptive text, there are some generic structures (actually not mandatory) for our writing to be true. The arrangement is:

- 1. Identification: contains about the introduction of a person, place, animal or object will be described.
- 2. Description: contains a description of something such as animal, things, place or person by describing its features, forms, colors, or anything related to what the writer describes.

## **Previous studies**

There is a journal article by Gabriela Balansa et al. (2023) titled "An Analysis of Students' Ability and Difficulty in Writing Descriptive Text at SMP Negeri 2 Tondano." This research aimed to assess students' skills in tackling the challenges of creating a descriptive text using writing tests and questionnaires as research instruments. The previous study involved twenty students from the seventh grade at SMP Negeri 2 Tondano. Based on the data obtained, the researchers identified factors that contribute to students' difficulties in writing descriptive text. This previous research is valuable in helping the current researchers identify the problems faced by students in writing descriptive text within the English education study program. The similarity between the previous study and the current research lies in the analysis and discussion of students' problems in descriptive text. However, the difference lies in the sample and population, as the previous research involved twenty students from SMP Negeri 2 Tondano, while this research focuses on twelve students from Pattimura University PSDKU Aru campus with third-semester English Education study program students.

Article by Mia Chairnussia (2021) with the topic "An Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Writing Descriptive Text at the First Semester of the Tenth Grade Students of SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Bandar Lampung 2020/2021 Academic Year." This previous study discussed the difficulties encountered by students in writing descriptive text and employed a qualitative method. The research instruments used in this study included documents, interviews, and questionnaires. The objective of the previous study was to identify students' difficulties in writing descriptive text and determine the dominant aspects that students encountered at SMA Muhammadiyah Bandar Lampung during the 2020/2021 academic year. The sample and population of the previous study consisted of twenty-five students from class X IPS 3. The similarities between the previous research and the current research are that both discuss writing descriptive text, employ qualitative methods, and utilize interviews and questionnaires as research instruments. However, the difference lies in the research settings, as the previous study was conducted at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Bandar Lampung with tenth-grade students, while this research is conducted at Pattimura University's PSDKU Aru campus with third-semester English Education study program students.

#### **METHODS**

## **Research Design**

In this research, all 9 students of the 3rd semester English education study program at Pattimura University, Ambon, this research used quantitative research with two research procedures, namely writing tests and interviews to find out the challenges and problems that students encountered when writing descriptive texts.

They are students who take the "paragrap writing" course, academic year 2024-2025. The role of the lecturer is as a facilitator who monitors students in the process of writing a descriptive text. In this study, each student wrote one of the descriptive texts as a result of the paragraph writing course they attended. During the writing process, they practiced writing skills and the result of writing consisted of 5 sentences containing a topic, supporting sentences for sub-topics, body, and conclusion. In addition, they are also required to fill in 7 research questions that researchers use to find out what challenges and difficulties students face when writing or making a descriptive text.

The data analysis technique in this research uses 5 components in finding the results of the scale of the students' writing test on the descriptive text they wrote and using the formula of Annasudjono (2010). In addition, to assess the results of 7 research maps were used to explain in detail using the Miles, Hubermann, and Saldana (2014) techniques.

No.	Component of writing	score	Range and indicators
1	Content	A (9-10) B (7-8)	<ul> <li>Very good:</li> <li>The ideas are about the topic selected. The ideas are clearly stated.</li> <li>The ideas are clearly supported.</li> <li>The ideas are comprehensible.</li> <li>The ideas are well developed.</li> <li>The ideas are fluently expressed</li> <li>Good:</li> </ul>
			<ul> <li>The ideas are about the topic selected.</li> <li>The ideas are clearly stated.</li> <li>The ideas are clearly supported.</li> <li>The ideas are quite comprehensible.</li> <li>The ideas are adequate relevant.</li> <li>The ideas are generally well develop.</li> </ul>
		C (5-6)	<ul> <li>Arrange:</li> <li>The ideas are about the topic selected.</li> <li>The ideas are clearly stated.</li> </ul>

Table1: components of writing

		D (3-4) E (1-2)	<ul> <li>The ideas are getting enough to support.</li> <li>The ideas are quiet relevant.</li> <li>The ideas are generally developed.</li> <li>The ideas are sufficiently expressed</li> <li>Poor: <ul> <li>The ideas are about the topic selected.</li> <li>The ideas are not clearly stated.</li> <li>The ideas are getting limit to support.</li> <li>The ideas are not quiet limit.</li> <li>The ideas are lack of developing.</li> <li>The ideas are non-fluent expressed</li> </ul> </li> <li>Very poor: <ul> <li>The ideas are about the topic selected.</li> <li>The ideas are not quiet</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
			<ul> <li>to evaluate.</li> <li>The ideas are incomprehensible.</li> <li>No communication of ideas.</li> <li>The ideas are irrelevant.</li> <li>It has very poor of</li> </ul>
2	organization	A (9-10) B (7-8)	<ul> <li>development of ideas</li> <li>Very good: <ul> <li>The ideas are well organized.</li> <li>The ideas are concise.</li> <li>The ideas are coherent.</li> <li>The ideas are relevant to outline.</li> <li>The ideas are presented in logical sequencing.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Good: <ul> <li>The ideas are adequate organized.</li> <li>The ideas are quite concise.</li> <li>The ideas are adequate cohesion.</li> <li>The ideas are adequate cohesion.</li> </ul> </li> <li>The ideas are relevant to outline.</li> </ul>

			• The ideas are sufficient
			sequencing
		C (5-6)	Arrange:
			• The ideas are generally
			organized.
			• Few ideas are break out
			cohesion.
			• The ideas are generally
			coherent.
			• The ideas are mostly
			relevant outline.
			• The ideas are in some
			logical sequencing.
		D (3-4)	Poor:
		D (3-4)	The ideas are almost
			loosely organized.
			• The ideas are inadequate
			cohesion.
			• The ideas are inadequate
			coherent.
			• The ideas are confuse and
			disconnected.
			• The ideas are somewhat
			relevant to outline.
			• The ideas are lack in
			logical sequencing.
		E (1-2)	Very good:
			<ul> <li>Lack of organization.</li> </ul>
			• The ideas are incoherent.
			• The ideas are not enough
			to evaluate.
			• The ideas are not or almost
			not relevant to outline.
			• The ideas are not or almost
			not presented in logical
			sequencing
3	mechanics	A (9-10)	Very good:
			• Almost sentences used in
			paragraph have correct
			punctuation, capitalization,
			and spelling
		B (7-8)	Good:
		<,	• Some the punctuation,
			capitalization, and spelling
			are incorrect
		C (5-6)	Arrange:
		- (* *)	Half punctuation,
			capitalization, and spelling
			are incorrect.
		D (3-4)	Poor:
		J (J-7)	More than half of
			punctuation, capitalization, and spelling are incorrect
I	l	I	and spenning are incorrect

		E (1-2)	Very poor:
			• Almost the punctuation, capitalization, and spelling are incorrect.
4	vocabulary	A (9-10)	Very good:
	Vocabulary	11(9-10)	<ul> <li>Almost paragraph has appropriate and effective words</li> </ul>
		B (7-8)	Good:
			• Some words of paragraph do not use an appropriate words
		C (5-6)	Arrange:
			• Half words of paragraph are not effective and inappropriate
		D (3-4)	Poor:
			• More than half words of paragraph are not effective and inappropriate
		E (1-2)	Very poor:
			Almost words of
			paragraph are not effective and appropriate
5	Language use	A (9-10)	Very good:
			<ul> <li>Almost paragraph have correct structure (word, order, pronouns, prepositions, articles, conjunctions, tenses, etc).</li> </ul>
		B (7-8)	Good:
		D (( , 0)	• Some structure of
			paragraphs are incorrect (word order, pronouns, prepositions, articles, conjunction, tenses, etc).
		C (5-6)	Arrange:
			• Half structures of
			paragraph are incorrect
			(word order, pronouns, preposition, articles,
			conjunctions, tenses, etc).
		D (3-4)	Poor:
			• More than half of structure of paragraph are incorrect
			(word order, pronouns, preposition, article.
		E (1-2)	conjunction, tenses, etc).: Very poor:
		L (1-2)	<ul> <li>Almost structures of</li> </ul>
			paragraph are incorrect (word order, pronouns,
			preposition, articles,
			conjunctions, tenses, etc).

Apart from that, this research uses an alternative from Miles, Hubberman and Saldana (2014) to explain in detail using data reduction, data display and verifying conclusion.

## FINDINGS

# **Research findings**

Research findings were carried out through descriptive text writing tests and interviews to find the difficulties and challenges that students face in writing descriptive text with scale values.

1. Content

After analyzing students' writing test, researcher found very good, good, and Average points of 9 students' problem in writing descriptive text in content. Where: D.K, B.L, A.N found 9 points, J.S found 8 points, M.Dj, L.L found 7 points, and A.K, A.K found 6 points of content in writing test

2. Organization

After analyzing students' writing test, the researcher found very good, good, and average points of 9 students' problem in writing descriptive text in organization. Where: D.K, B.L has 10 points, A.N found 9 points, L.L found 8 points, A.K, A.K, J.S found 7 points, and M. Dj, D.R found 6 points of organization of writing test.

3. Mechanics

After analyzing students' writing test, the researcher found very good, good, and average points of 9 students' problems in writing descriptive text in mechanics. Where: D.K, B.L found 9 points, A.N found 8 points, L.L, J.S found 7 points, and M. Dj, AK, A.K, D.R found 6 points of mechanics in writing test

4. Vocabulary

After analyzing students' writing test, the researcher found very good, good, and average points of 9 students' problems in writing descriptive text in using vocabulary.

Where: B.L found 10 points, D.K, A.N found 9 points, M. Dj found 8 points, A.K, D.R found 7 points, A.K found 6 points, and L.L, J.S found 5 points of using vocabulary in writing test.

5. Language use

After analyzing students' writing test, the researcher found very good, good, and average points of 9 students' problems in writing descriptive text in language use.

Where: B.L found 10 points, A.N, J.S found 8 points, D.K, M. Dj, A.K, L.L, D.R found 7 points and A.K found 7 points of language use in writing test.

NO	STUDENTS INITIAL	TOTAL ERROR OF SENTENCE	PERCENTAGES
1	D. K	-	-
2	M.DJ	4	16.67%
3	A.K	5	20.83%
4	A.K	5	20.83%
5	L.L	3	12.5%
6	A.N	-	-
7	A.N	1	4.17%
8	D.R	5	20.83%

Table: result of students' total problems in writing descriptive text.

9	J.S	1	4.17%
	TOTAL OF ERROR	24 ERRORS	100%

## Result of students' problems in writing descriptive text through interview

Based on answer, D.K, M. Dj, L.L, D.R and J.S answered they found difficult in vocabulary. Meanwhile, A.K, B.L, A.N and A.K answered they found difficult in using grammar when writing descriptive text. D.K, A.K, A.N answered they often to write descriptive text and M. Dj, A.K, L.L, B.L, and D.R answered they writed if lecturer give test to write. all students answered they has writed 5 until 20 sentences when writing descriptive text. All students answered the time that gave the lecturer to write a descriptive paragraph of 1 week and that was very enough. All students answered them at the time to see the back of their respective paragraphs and also given feedback so that it helps students in writing descriptive paragraphs. Some students answered they have a descriptive text writing experience still at high school, while some also answer them have not experience of descriptive text writing, and they new learners write in lectures. Where: D.S, M.Dj, A.K, L.L, and A.N has experience of write descriptive text at high school, while A.K, B.L, D.R, and J.S answered they have not experience of write descriptive text at high school. A.K, B.L, D.R, and J.S answered they has lack in using grammar, A.K and L.L answered the sentences in the arrangement are irregular, the process of understanding less, has not been appropriate in the word selection, the weakness vocabulary, D.K answered false in determining the appropriate connection sentence, and M.Dj answered The written sentence is not in the stacking with the right rule, still extend and still lack of word.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the finding of students' problems in writing descriptive text. It showed that students made a total of 24 errors which consist of D.K and B.L (-) not found problems of content, Organization, mechanic, Vocabulary, and Language use. A.K, A.K and D.R found (20.83%) Problems of content, Organization, mechanic, Vocabulary, and Language use. A.N and J.S found (4.17%) problem of content, Organization, mechanic, Vocabulary, and Language use. M. Dj found (16.67%) problems of content, Organization, mechanic, Vocabulary, and, Language use. and L.L found (12.5%) problems of content, Organization, mechanic, Vocabulary, and, Language use to writing descriptive text. The interview showed that the factors causing students problems in writing descriptive text and experience of students.

#### REFERENCES

- Alves, R. A. (2008): *Writing as problem-solving*. In M Torrance, L. Van Waes, & D. Galbraith (eds.), writing and cognition: research and application (pp. 83-89). elsevier.
- Brown, A. (2001). *Writing as a process of thinking*: The effect of writing on On thinking processes. The journal of writing research, 2(3), 101-116.
- Desi N.K. (2015): writing strategies used descriptive text.
- Fitri H (2020): An Analysis of students' difficulties in Writing descriptive text at eight grades of SMPN 1 Kubung on 2020/2021 academic year.
- Gabriella Balansa at al. (2023): "Analysis of students' ability and difficulty in writing Descriptive text at SMP Negeri 2 Tondano. JoTELL Journal of teaching English,Linguistics, and literature published by English education study program, faculty of Faculty of languages and artis, universitas negeri Manado, Vol.2 No.11, PP. 1420-1428

- Handayani (2020): " an Analysis of students' difficulties in writing descriptive text at SMPN 1Kubung on 2020/2021 academic year.
- H. Novariana et Al. (2018): senior Hight school students' problem writing.
- Hendri pramadya (2016). Analisis kesalahan gramatikal dalam presentasi bisnis berbahasa berbahasa Inggris (STUDI KASUS MAHASISWA ASMTB 2016-2017). Akademi sekretaris dan menajemen Taruna Bakti. JSAB II (1) (1018)84-94. Jurnal homepage: http://jurnal.asmtb.ac.id/index.php/jsab
- Isna (2019): An analysis of students' ability and difficulties in descriptive Text a study at Second grade of SMPN 3 Bontonompo.
- Ismayanti, Kholiq (2020): An Analysis of students' difficulties in writing descriptive text. JURNAL ELNIK 7(1):10 DOI:307361lej.v7i9.260.
- Jaya, Widiaswati. (2022): An analysis of students' problem in Writing descriptive text.
- Jumaid, Firman (2023): The use of ulead studio program products (UVIOpro) to Improve the students' writing. Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar, Indonesia. Acitvia : Journal of teaching and education. Vol. 5 No. 2, 2023
- Mia C. (2021): An analysis of students' difficulties of descriptive text at the first semester of the Tenth grade of SMA Muhammadiyah, FACULTY OF TARBIYAH AND TEACHER TRAINING STALE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY STUDIES RADEN INTAN LAMPUNG.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, M. A., & Saldana, J. (2020): *Qualitative data analysis: A method* sourcebook. Sage publication.
- Novan P. (2019): students' problems on writing descriptive text (a case study at SMAN 1 Nur Choirony, at. Al (2018). Erros analisis of students' writing descriptive Text based on surface strategy taxonomy. English Departement, Lampung University. Jekulo Kudus academic year 20019/2020).
- R. Johan (2018): Introducing descriptive text to the students use English Towrism brochures.
- Suriyanti at Al. (2022): " The students' problem in writing descriptive text at seventh grade Students of SMP Negeri 1 Samarinda", BENJOLE, 2 (1), 14-20.
- Sahal (2018): Students Error in using present tense in writing descriptive Text (A study at MTsS Jeumala Amal Leung Putuh. FACULTY OR EDUCATION AND TEACHER TRAINING AR-RANIRY UNIVERSITY BANDA ACEH. 2018.
- Subrata Bhowmic (2021): Writing intruction in an EFL context: learning to write or writing to learn language? DOI:10.36832/beltaj.2021.0501.03
- Zulmaid, R. (2022): Implementasi metode outdoor learning dalam meningkatkan hasil belajar siswa pada pembelajaran pendidikan agama Islam di SMA 1 MEDAN. Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara. Jurnal penelitian,Pendidikan dan pengajaran | Vol.3 No. 2 2022.