The Students' Difficulties in Acquiring English Writing

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Abstract: Writing skill is an essential skill which includes all knowledge and abilities to express one's ideas through the written word. However, English writing has always been a challenge to master by the students, especially students in junior high schools. The main objective of this research is focused on finding out student's difficulties in acquiring writing English. This study used case study with descriptive qualitative research. About 26 students are as the participants of the research. The data gained through document analysis, questioners and interview. The result indicates students had a significant problem in writing English. The findings revealed that the most significant problems are because of their lack of vocabulary mastery and language used. They assumed that they had limited knowledge in constructing sentence grammatically and also their lack of vocabulary mastery made them felt confused in choosing the word. Besides, they also were not interested in English.

Keywords: English Writing Skill writing difficulties, Acquiring

I. INTRODUCTION

There are four competencies in studying English they are: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Writing is one in every language studying competency that is very beneficial for those who learn English specifically for students. According to Harmer (2007), writing (as one of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing) has always formed part of the syllabus in the teaching of English.

It has been realized that writing is one in all English skills that has to be perfect by a people language learner. Writing is additionally thought of because the indicator toward the students' success in learning English and their future skilled careers. Kingston, et.al. (2002) state that student's achievement in learning English is barely measured by the productive skills, particularly the writing performance. Moreover, recently people like the written sort of communication in accessing info to the oral communication. To support the concept of the importance of writing performance, Abbas (2007) states that one of the characteristics of the twenty first century is that English has modified its idea in term of the language use; the speech communication that is extremely dominant are going to be followed by the additional dominant of the written language. Thus, the target of a people teaching and learning should be emphasized at serving to the students to be able to communicate each in spoken and written forms.

Referring to standard of Competency and Basic Competence of curriculum 2013, the purpose of writing for the Junior High School is to encourage the students to write some kinds of texts in the form of functional texts (greeting cards, announcements, notice, and label), transactional (to get things done), interpersonal conversation (socialization) in text, and monolog texts (descriptive, recount, procedure, narrative, and report). These texts have their own characteristics, such as social function, generic schematic structures, lexical items, and grammatical features.

Based on standard of Competency and Basic Competence of curriculum 2013, the objectives of teaching writing of the ninth grade are to make students are able to create short functional texts and simple monolog texts are procedure, narrative and report text. The students should understand the social function (purpose), generic structure, and language features of the texts. Therefore, every student should be able to write. But in fact, the limitation of vocabulary and lack ability in writing their ideas with the use of correct grammar and punctuation makes troublesome for the students to put in writing and to translate each word and sentence. They find it difficult to use correct grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation to structure English sentences into a readable and acceptable text. The students seemed to be reluctant in

writing their stories because they did not have sufficient idea on what story they were going to write. The students only had few words to write whenever they were asked to start composing the text. As addition, they often questioned the teacher what they should write and others wrote similar story done by a friend sitting next to them or in other words, they are poor of ideas. Based on the reason, the main objective of the writer is to identify the problems faced by the students in acquiring Writing skill in English.

II. METHOD

A. Research Setting

This research is conducted at the ninth grade of SMPN 32 Medan. The location of the school is at Jl. Marelan V Kelurahan No.123, Rengas Pulau, Kec. Medan Marelan, Kota Medan. The location is chosen because the researcher has taught at this school for 2 years and interested in researching students' difficulties in learning English especially in writing skill.

B. Data and Data Source

Data in this research will be obtained from conducting interview with the participants (about students' difficulties of acquiring English writing) and documentation as follows the participants' transcript grade list. In taking data, the researcher needs sources to get the available data.

Data source is the subject of the research from where the data can be obtained. Data sources are the important thing in conducting research. Thus, data source is the substance where the researcher will get information that is required. Ary et.al (1985) argued that in qualitative research, there are two sources that can be used to get the data. Those are:

1. Primary source

   The primary source is to give prominent data relate to problems of the research. For the primary source, the researcher uses the result of interview and questionnaire. In qualitative research, the result of interview can be used as the strongest source to get the information.

2. Secondary source

   Secondary source has function to collecting data for different purpose when conducting research. Here, the secondary source which is used is document. The document is the subjects' grade transcript. The grade transcript is used to know the students who include in big five students.

C. Research Method

In this research, the researcher used descriptive qualitative research. The descriptive qualitative method is used to investigate the students' difficulties of acquiring English writing. Sugiono (2015) stated that qualitative research has natural setting as the direct source of data and researcher is the key instrument, dynamic in looking the object, based on a real object, holistic, and there was not influence from others.

D. Technique of Collecting Data

In order to collect the data, The analysis is the technique of analysing the instrument of Observation, interview and documentation. Observation is needed to make the data stronger. The interview is one of the most commonly used as the source of data collection. Researcher conduct informal face-to-face interviews. This is an instant, roughly structured interview. We also conduct guided interviews. That is, as the interviewer attends the session, he plans to investigate a problem related to the student's speaking skills and outcomes and ask the interviewer specific open-form questions.

E. Technique of Analyzing Data

Technique of analysing data is descriptive analytical approach. The concept of descriptive analytical approach (filed of descriptive analytical approach) is: "In-depth descriptive method, in which the scientific researcher describes the various scientific phenomena and problems, and solve problems and questions that fall within the scientific research department, then the data collected is analysed by the descriptive analytical approach, so that the appropriate explanation and results can be extracted. A technique for analysing documentation tools that were student scores is to calculate the data and categorize the data. The technique for analysing survey data is to identify the data, tabulate the data, and calculate the data. Meanwhile, the technique of analysing the instrument of the interview consists of analysing and describing the result of the interview then writing a conclusion based on the data analysis.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Result

After collecting the data, the researcher analyzed the data based on each instrument. In the other hand, the students' problem in writing were explained based score lists student's writing task, questioner the students and interview the English teacher. While, the causes of students' problem in writing were explained based on the result of interview with the students.

The documents in this research were score student's writing task. To know about students' problems in writing especially in monolog text, the researcher was taking score student's writing task about procedure text and narrative text at ninth grade of SMPN 32 Medan. From the total of the students at the ninth grade, the researcher took IX-1 class that consist of 26 students as the sample test.

The list of students' scores in writing procedure text and narrative task shows that almost all of students score below the KKM (70). Look at the data below:

Table 1. Students' scores in writing procedure text and narrative text task 9-1 Class SMPN 32 Medan

NO	Initial Name	Procedure Text	Narrative Text
1	AA	75	70
2	AD	50	60
3	BP	50	50
4	DN	60	65
5	DO	50	60
6	ES	65	70
7	FM	70	75
8	FN	70	75
9	FR	75	70
10	FMI	75	75
11	GI	50	65
12	IB	50	50
13	LF	60	65
14	MR	50	55
15	MRP	60	40
16	MS	60	55
17	MH	70	70
18	MO	40	50
19	NR	70	75
20	NE	70	70
21	NZ	65	50
22	RM	65	65
23	SG	50	65
24	WS	70	70
25	RK	30	50
26	RHN	50	40

In other hand the data by using questionnaire counted and categorized students' responses. There are 26 respondents completed the questionnaire. Overall, the findings indicated that students' problem usually occurred when they were writing. Researchers took questions from previous research conducted by Alisha, F., Safitri, N., & Santoso, I. (2019). The data collect after finished teaching learning process. The researcher found the result and formulate questionnaire based on organization, vocabulary, and language use. Each aspect in writing was divided into 15 statements

Table 2. Data analysis related to organization

No	Statement	Yes	No
		(Percentage %)	
1	I don't rarely understand about generic structure, so I rarely pay attention during writing the text	53,84	46,15
2	I feel the ideas that I shared not clear and well organized	57,69	42,30
3	The ideas that I shared is hard to understand	61,53	38,46
4	Each paragraph was not coherent	61,53	38,46
5	I rarely pay attention to the sequence of the sentence in each paragraph	46,15	53,84
	Average	56,14	43,84

Table 3. Data analysis related to vocabulary

No	Statement	Yes	No
		(Percentage %)	
1	I often did some mistakes in choosing the word	61,53	38,46
2	I got difficulties in expressing the ideas because lack of vocabulary	69,23	30,76
3	I often repeat a word writing paragraph	76,92	23,07
4	I always use the simple words in writing the paragraph	76,92	23,07
5	I feel, I always need dictionary when writing in English	96,15	3,84
	Average	76,15	23,84

Table 4. Data analysis related to language use

No	Statement	Yes	No
		(Percentage %)	
1	I always face difficulties in making a good and correct sentence because of the lack of ability in grammar.	76,92	23,07
2	I don't pay attention of the using connectors in writing	76,92	23,07
3	I often did some mistake in using action verb in past form	69,23	30,76
4	I seldom pay attention to the aspect of grammar	57,69	42,30
5	I always faced problem in tense that will be used	57,69	42,30
	Average	67,69	32,3

To support the data, the researcher employed an interview English teacher of IX-1 of the SMPN 32 Medan. The interview consists of eight questions. The first question the researcher asked was about the students' ability in writing text, second until eighth questions the researcher asked about students' problems in writing text. Take a look at the results of the following interviews:

Teacher's Interview Report

Question   : How is students' ability in writing especially monolog text?

Answer   : The students' ability in writing a text was pretty bad, because many students got score under KKM and just some students got score above KKM.

Question   : Is there any students' problem in writing especially monolog text? Answer : Yes, they have problems in writing monolog text.

Question   : What are the problems that students faced in writing monolog text?

Answer   : They have problem in organize ideas, lack of vocabulary, and lack of grammar.

Question   : Are students have problem in content when writing monolog? Answer : Yes, sometimes the paragraph has no unity.

Question   : Are students have problem in organization when writing monolog text?

Answer   : Yes, they struggle to organize and use mechanics of writing. They are also slow and inefficient in retrieving the right word(s) to express an idea. They struggle to develop their ideas fluently.

Question   : Are students have problem in vocabulary when writing monolog text?

Answer   : Yes, they are lack of vocabulary. Many students are lazy to bring a dictionary or even they are lazy to look for new vocabulary in dictionaries or in online dictionaries so that it is also an obstacle when learning. They only expect new vocabulary from the teacher.

Question   : Are students have problem in language when writing monolog text?

Answer   : Yes, they did not pay attention about sentence pattern in writing monolog text, grammatical use still not appropriate with each type of text.

In addition to supporting the data, the researcher also conducted interviews with several grade IX-1 students at SMPN 32 Medan. The researcher used Bahasa to interview students, then the researcher translated the interview into English. Based on the interviews, the researchers found the factors that caused students' difficulties in writing monologue texts. Here are the results of the interview:
Students' Interview Report

Question   : What are the causes that make you difficult in writing a text?

ES   : I don't understand how to arrange a good sentence in English miss, and also because I'm not interest in learning English

SG   : I rarely study English and I don't understand how to make a correct sentence in English

MR   : I am confused to write a good sentence in English miss. The material about narrative or procedure text are also difficult for me miss

AA   : I often forget the structure of each text. Therefore, I often write not according to the structure of the text.

FR   : I frequently use vocabulary that does not match the type of text. Like the dominant procedure text about cooking, I am not very good at words related to cooking.

FMI   : Sometimes, I forget the grammar used in each text.

RHN   : The problem is because I don't like English miss, it's too difficult".

LF   : Sometimes the explanation from the teacher is not interesting, miss. So, it makes me lazy to learn English.

DO   : The teacher's explanation was too difficult to understand, miss.

NR   : I don't understand the material.

B. Discussion

In this part, the researcher would like to discuss the result of the students' problem in writing especially monolog text, the most dominant problem in writing, and the causes of students' problems in writing produced by participants of ninth-grade students of SMPN 32 Medan.

The students' scores in writing procedure text and narrative task shows that only a few of the students scored above the KKM (70). Only 9 students of 26 students got score above KKM. Even those who get a score above the KKM do not get a satisfactory score. We supposed the students have been learning English for two years. So, due to the more experience to write a text. But in reality, many students have difficulty writing texts, especially monologue text (procedure and narrative text), which can be seen from their poor grades.

According to the data of questionnaire, the data analysis related to organization (Table 2) half participants (53.84%) felt don't really understand about generic structure. Half of participants also (57.60%) felt their ideas are not clear and well organized. A lot of the participants (61.53%) felt their ideas are hard to understand and each paragraph was not coherent. Almost half participants (46.15%) who rarely pay attention to the sequence of the sentence in each paragraph.

On average, a half participant (56,14 %) who got difficulties in organizing their text and the majority of respondents had problem because of their limited of knowledge about generic structure. In writing a genre, writers should pay attention to the purpose and the generic structure of the text.

Based on the analysis data related of vocabulary (Table 3) shows that the lack of vocabulary becomes the most of difficulties in writing process. 61.53% of participants did some mistake in choosing the word. Approximately two-thirds of participants (69.23%) got difficulties in expressing the ideas because lack of vocabulary. 76.92% of participants often repeat a word in paragraph and felt that they always use the simple words in writing the paragraph. The majority of participants (96.15%) needed to look up their dictionary when writing in English.

Thus, on average 76.15% of participants got difficulties in writing because of their lack of vocabulary. It related to the writer's vocabulary mastery. The words that the writers choose should appropriate and have suitable meaning, but most of the participant feel hesitate in choosing the words.

Based on the analysis data related of language use (Table 4), the majority of respondents (76.92%) felt that they always face difficulties in making a good and correct sentence because of the lack of ability in grammar and they do not to pay attention to the using connectors during writing. Approximately two-thirds of participants (69.23%) often did some mistake in using action verb in past form. 57.69% of participants seldom pay attention to the aspect of grammar and they faced problem in tense that will be used.

It can be concluded that the most of participants problem is in constructing a good sentence, because they felt they had lack of ability in using grammar. On average 67.69% of students had problems related to grammar using. It concerns to the grammatical rule that should be used by the writers to make a good composition, such as agreements, tense, number, word order or function, articles, pronouns, preposition, etc.

Furthermore, the result of interview of the English teacher also showed that the students' ability of students was still under criteria of minimum mastery (KKM). The interview had given to know the ability and problem of the students in writing procedure and narrative text. Based on the result of interview to the English teacher, the students had problem in writing procedure and narrative text as follows:

1. The students did not compose their writing coherently. In this case, the students write paragraph which has no unity. It indicating that the students had problem in content.
2. Some of students often write recount text without conclusion. Where the organization of recount text were orientation, events, and reorientation/ conclusion. It indicating that the

     students had problem in organization.

3. The students are lack of vocabulary. Based on the result of students written task, some students write incorrect and inappropriate words in their sentence. It indicating that the students had problem in vocabulary.

4. The students did not pay attention about sentence pattern in their writing. The grammatical use of recount text that they wrote still not appropriate. It indicating that the students had the problem in language.

5. The students less attention in punctuation and capitalization in their writing. It indicating that they had problem in mechanics.

Moreover, the result of student's interview shows that ES, SG, MR and FMI said that the cause of their difficulties was because they don't understand about grammar and don't understand how to arrange correct sentence. It can be said that the cause of their difficulties was lack of proficiency in the text production skill. Because grammar and how to arrange the sentence are included in the text production skill. Mastered grammar was important, if the students understood well about grammar, they be able to make a good text. The students who said that the cause of their difficulties was grammar they said that the teacher did not explain the grammar.

Beside that MR, AA and NR didn't understand about the material of procedure text or narrative text. It could be said that the cause of their difficulties was lack of knowledge relating to the subject content of the script to be written. Because the subject in this case were procedure text and narrative text, and the student said that they didn't understand about both of the material and they said that the material was difficult to understand.

In addition, ES, RHN and LF were not interested in learning English. Most of the students said that they didn't interest in learning English. Because, the students think that English was difficult to learn. Not only that, they said that writing in English is also difficult.

Thus, based on student's interview the researcher found three factors that make students faced difficulties in English writing. The two factors that same as Graham & Harris (in Glynn, 2006) said were lack of proficiency in the text production skills and lack of knowledge relating to the subject content of the script to be written. The students said that the cause of their difficulties were they didn't understand how to made a correct text and they didn't understand about grammar. The other factor that researcher found was lack of interest in learning English. Most the students of IX-1 SMPN 32 Medan said that the cause of their difficulties was because they were not interested in learning English. They said that English was difficult to learn.

IV.   CONCLUSION

From the result of observation and interview guide, the researcher concluded that students had a significant problem in writing English. The findings revealed that the most significant problems are because of their lack of vocabulary mastery and language used. They assumed that they had limited knowledge in constructing sentence grammatically and also their lack of vocabulary mastery made them felt confused in choosing the word. Besides, they also were not interested in English.

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6. The Publisher of the article who has given a chance to the researcher in publishing the article.

Finally, the researcher realized that this article was far from being perfect. Therefore, constructive suggestion was needed for the researcher to continue the research.

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