



Writing Descriptive Texts: What Makes this Difficult for Lower Secondary School Learners?

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Abstract: *Many EFL learners who have spent years studying the language cannot perform well in writing. The difficulties in producing written English can hinder the success of learning English. Thus, this research aims to analyse the challenges that students commonly face in writing descriptive text. It employed a qualitative descriptive method to study the writing performance of seventh-grade EFL learners in one of the Indonesian junior high schools. Observation, students' texts, and questionnaires were used to collect the data. The results of this study show that the difficulties in writing descriptive text concern language (vocabulary and language use), cognition (content, organisation, and mechanics), and psychological difficulties (feedback). The significant difficulty found in the students' writing is reflected by mistakes made in language mechanics, which returned the lowest mean score (1.71). The other factors contributing to the students' low writing performance are lack of vocabulary, of interest in learning English, and of understanding of language use and the structure of the text. Further factors include limited exposure to English writing activities – compounded by limited availability of dictionaries – as well as ineffective feedback from the teacher. Based on the results, it is suggested that teachers pay more attention to all aspects of challenges faced by students and their contributing factors by creating or providing creative and effective learning methods or media that can encourage students to achieve their learning objectives.*

Keywords: *students' difficulties, writing, descriptive text*

INTRODUCTION

The goal of Indonesia as an English Foreign Language (EFL) country is to prepare learners to master the English language well. The English language in Indonesia is generally introduced at the elementary school level and, in certain cases, in kindergarten, with an emphasis on basic English. In addition, learning English formally continues from junior and senior high school to university level (Kusuma et al., 2017). The students need more habituation and practice in learning English, since it is not their mother tongue.

English learning centres on the development of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. All of these skills are interconnected and form the foundation of language learning. Writing is one of four skills that are crucial to master in English language learning (Nasser, 2018). Language learners produce written products, such as text, personal letters, announcements, stories and reports. Writing is a systematic process that involves constructing words, sentences,

and paragraphs to produce a whole text. Yulianawati (2018) stipulates in her research that writing is a complicated skill because the writer needs to develop ideas that involve some elements of the target language. Mastering English writing skills is not easy for EFL learners because they need to do it in a language that is not their mother tongue. In this case, this skill may pose trouble for students. According to Harmer (2007), some aspects hinder students in writing; for example, they find it difficult to choose a suitable topic and idea, they lack planning and organising ideas, they have limited understanding of the mechanics of a written text, and there is no revision of their final writing product.

Various types of text that students are required to learn appear in the syllabus of the seventh-grade junior high school, and this research focuses on descriptive text. Descriptive texts generally describe people, animals, and things (Siregar, 2021). According to Dirgeyesa (2016), descriptive writing aims to draw or illustrate an object, place, or person in words. In describing people, the learners may illustrate outward appearance, such as fashion style and physical characteristics. Additionally, the writing may mention personal traits, such as kind, cheerful, lazy, humble or diligent. Learners need to pay close attention to describing the selected object in detail, including how it looks, smells, tastes, feels or sounds (Kane, 2000).

Previous studies relate to students' difficulties with writing skills, such as their difficulties in writing English (Alisha et al., 2019). Another study (Yoandita, 2019) is concerned with ability, and difficulties in writing descriptive text. Noprianto (2017) focuses on the perspectives of SFL students on writing descriptive text. In contrast with the three studies mentioned, and based on pre-observation, the researchers were informed by the teacher that the students face problems in their writing that influence the success of learning. Therefore, it is important to analyse the difficulties that students face in writing descriptive text and the factors contributing to them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing

Communicative language is divided into spoken and written language. Moreover, each language has its own function and limits in its usage (Hasan & Marzuki, 2017). The way to communicate indirectly is through the form of writing. Moreover, writing skill indicates a productive and effective activity, because learners are required to be able to arrange and produce written product in the form of sentences, paragraphs, and texts (Kusuma et al., 2017). For English foreign learners, in addition to reading and writing, speaking and listening are two of the four competences that must be acquired and are constantly emphasised in the teaching and learning of English. Writing is a crucial skill that helps them to have detailed interaction in academic scope. This opinion is supported by Yulianawati (2018) stating that writing is an activity of pouring ideas from the graphic symbols which serves the purpose of presenting a language in order to deliver meanings. Writing activities mostly represent a person's English proficiency. For this reason, the things we write and the ways we express them are used by others to assess our capacity for thought. Moreover, this might be the most effective way for a teacher

to appreciate their students' capabilities in learning English. However, more time needs to be spent on this skill for understanding each component of the target language, since learners need to submit their thoughts in a sentence, paragraph, or a whole text that has a sense. In this way, the writer hopes that the reader can capture information clearly about the writer's messages in the written product.

Descriptive text

Descriptive text is one of the text types that has the purpose of explaining a topic by defining people, animals, and things in detail (Siregar, 2021). The details should indicate the five senses such as how something looks, smells, sounds, feels, and tastes (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). Descriptive text is formed by identification and description structures. Moreover, it has specific characteristics of language features such as the use of present tense, the variety of adjectives, linking verbs, and specific participants (Dirgeyesa, 2016). In other words, to describe the point of view of some things gives them a visual appearance, making the written form feel alive. Moreover, there are some text types among written product that are identified based on the junior high school syllabus. Descriptive text is one of these text types that have to be mastered by junior high school students. The main goal of students learning this text is to be able to communicate in a variety of ways, both oral and written.

Students' difficulties in writing

In a process of learning, it cannot be denied that there will be problems. Especially, in learning the English language in a country foreign to English, for example Indonesia. There are four English skills to be mastered by students. One of which is writing. Pratiwi (2016) states that students' difficulties in writing arise basically from language aspects such as vocabulary, spelling, grammar and punctuation. This is in line with Alisha et al. (2019), whose research finds that students lacking a mastery of vocabulary and grammar have the most difficulty in the writing process. If a student does not quite develop writing skills, they will be unable to write with the speed and fluency required to be successful as demands increase. Indeed, when a student is having difficulty with a writing assignment, the writing process itself interferes with the learning process. On the other hand, Byrne (1988) describes three factors that cause writing activity to be difficult for students, namely linguistic, cognitive, and psychological difficulties. Linguistic difficulty (inappropriate use of vocabulary, including word choice and language use in written sentences), cognitive difficulty (ineffective communication in the content and organisation of writing, as well as mechanics – spelling, punctuation and capitalisation), psychological difficulty (less interaction and feedback from the reader or teacher during the writing process).

RESEARCH METHOD

This is qualitative research designed with a qualitative descriptive method that employed descriptive data in the form of words. The qualitative approach involves the process of obtaining data by exploring certain phenomena in natural data sets. The data collected were words within descriptions that interpret the larger meaning of the findings (Creswell, 2015). In this regard, the researchers analysed

and described in detail the difficulties faced by students during their practice of writing descriptive text for the seventh grade of a junior high school in Pasuruan. The participants in this research were 32 students of VII A class, 20 of them male and 12 females. Only 28 of the total participants were selected as samples. This class was chosen because the students were less responsive to learning English. Furthermore, both the teachers and the students testified that the students struggled in writing, especially in the English language. The data for this research was collected from observation, students’ texts, and questionnaires (adopted from Yoandita, 2019). The students’ text results were analysed using Brown’s (2007) writing rubric, as depicted in Table 1. The goal was to identify the students’ linguistic difficulties (vocabulary and language use) and cognitive difficulties (content, organisation and mechanics) in writing descriptive text from the mean score obtained for each of these aspects of analysis.

Table 1. *Writing rubric* (adopted from Brown, 2007)

Aspect	Score	Performance Description
Content (C) - Topic - Detail	4	The topic and supporting points are well concerning to subject
	3	The topic and supporting points are nearly intelligible and concerning to subject
	2	The topic and supporting points are slightly concerning to subject
	1	The topic and the supporting points are not concerning to subject
Organisation (O) - Identification - Description	4	Well organised with proper connectives of identification and descriptions
	3	Nearly well-organised with almost proper connectives of identification and description
	2	Several misuses of connectives in organising identification and description
	1	Incomplete and poor organisation of identification and description
Language Use (L) - Use simple present tense - Agreement	4	Uses proper agreements or grammatical features
	3	Several inaccurate agreements or grammatical features but these do not affect meaning
	2	Various inaccurate agreements or grammatical features
	1	Very poor inaccurate agreements or grammatical features
Vocabulary (V)	4	Effective word forms and word choices
	3	Several misuses of word forms and vocabulary, but these do not change the meaning
	2	Demonstrates limited choices of words and word forms
	1	Inadequate knowledge of word forms, words, and not intelligible
Mechanics (M)	4	Uses proper capitalisation, spelling, and punctuation

- Capitalisation	3	Shows occasional capitalisation, spelling and punctuation errors
- Spelling		
- Punctuation	2	Show frequent capitalisation, spelling and punctuation errors
	1	Major errors in capitalisation, spelling and punctuation

The mean formula used is adapted from Gay (1981).

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

\bar{X} = Mean

$\sum X$ = Total of score in each aspect

N = Number of students in a particular group

FINDINGS

The Difficulties Faced by Students in Writing Descriptive Text

The data provided is based on observations. The researchers observed the students for two weeks, attending two meetings per week. The data on the students' actual conditions during the teaching-learning activities was obtained in the first week. Based on the students' text and the questionnaire, the second week was used to gather information about the students' concerns in writing descriptive text. Since the observations on the teaching and learning processes were conducted during the pandemic, the observations were conducted in two different sessions on two different days. The English education subject for 7A students was scheduled on Monday and Thursday. Students with presence numbers 1-16 joined the first observation session on Monday, while students with presence numbers 17-32 attended the second session on Thursday. Students received the same material and explanation in both sessions.

First Week Meeting

The researchers held two meetings in the first week (Monday 24 January and Thursday 27 January, 2022). The teacher opened the lesson with greetings "Assalamu'alaikum students, good morning, and how are you?" After that, the teacher checked the students' attendance list. A student from the first session was absent that day.

The teacher then reviewed previous materials. After going through the generic structure and language features of descriptive text, the teacher carried on explaining the language features for describing a person's physical appearance. The teacher elaborated on the physical traits that are outwardly observable, such as the body and characteristics. Then the teacher showed printed photos of Indonesian actors and actresses to give visual cues from which the students could point out physical features to describe. Using this process, the teacher assisted the students. The teacher also wrote the words that were mentioned by the students on the whiteboard, so that the students could copy them into their notebooks. Lastly, the teacher asked the students to bring a small photo such as a passport photo to the next lesson; students could bring a photo of an actor, actress, or whomever they wished to describe. The teacher then wrapped up the class.

Second Week Meeting

The second round of activities was conducted in the second week (Monday 31 January and Thursday 3 February, 2022). The teacher opened the class with a greeting and found that two students were not present on both days.

The teacher then reviewed physical appearance by describing people briefly from the last lesson. As a follow-up to the instruction given at the previous meeting, the teacher asked the students to put their photos on the table. The teacher instructed the students to write a descriptive text related to the photo they had brought in 10 sentences, using a worksheet that the teacher and the researchers had designed together. Then the teacher gave the students 25 minutes to write with help from their manual dictionary. After writing, some students were asked to present in front of the class their descriptive text based on the worksheet. After the teacher collected the worksheets, the researchers checked them. The researchers also gave the students questionnaires to fill out after class, with instructions. The students completed the questionnaires and submitted them to the researchers. The meeting was then concluded with greetings.

The researchers analysed 28 students’ descriptive text writings that were collected in the second week’s lesson. The researchers calculated the mean scores of each writing analysis aspect formulated from Brown’s writing rubric (2007) to reveal the writing difficulties the students face. From the analysis, the researchers concluded that linguistic difficulty (vocabulary and language use) and cognitive difficulty (content, organisation and mechanics) are the most common difficulties in writing descriptive text. These aspects are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Students’ text result analysis*

Students’ code	Aspect of analysis				
	V	L	C	O	M
S.1	2	3	3	2	1
S.2	2	2	3	3	1
S.3	2	2	3	2	1
S.4	3	3	3	3	2
S.5	3	4	3	3	3
S.6	2	3	2	2	1
S.7	2	3	2	1	1
S.8	3	4	4	3	2
S.9	3	3	4	3	4
S.10	3	4	3	2	3
S.11	2	2	2	2	1
S.12	3	3	3	3	1
S.13	2	2	3	2	2
S.14	2	1	2	1	1
S.15	2	2	2	1	1
S.16	2	2	3	3	1
S.17	2	2	2	1	1
S.18	2	1	3	2	2

Students' code	Aspect of analysis				
	V	L	C	O	M
S.19	2	3	3	2	2
S.20	3	3	3	2	2
S.21	2	2	2	2	2
S.22	3	3	4	3	3
S.23	2	1	3	1	2
S.24	2	1	2	2	1
S.25	1	1	2	2	1
S.26	2	3	3	2	2
S.27	3	2	3	2	1
S.28	2	2	2	2	2
Total score	64	67	77	59	48
Mean	2.29	2.40	2.75	2.11	1.71

Note: V (Vocabulary), L (Language use), C (Content), O (Organization), M (Mechanics)

As indicated by the lowest mean scores in Table 2, the most significant difficulties that the students faced were related to mechanics (1.71), organisation (2.11), vocabulary (2.29), language use (2.40), and content (2.75).

Some examples of the problems appearing in the students' writing are as follows:

Vocabulary

Vocabulary deals with the word choice and expressions used appropriately to describe the topic in the paragraph. In their writing, the students were inclined to write words like, for example:

1. She is **aktris**. (S.19)
2. He is **artis** Indonesia. (S.17)
3. He has **beautiful** face. (S.27)
4. He is 23 **years**. (S.28)

As shown in examples 1 and 2, the students used the Indonesian language *aktris* and *artis* instead of using 'actress' and 'actor'. Example 3 shows that the students used 'beautiful face' to describe the physical appearance of a male subject instead of 'handsome'. In example 4, the students missed the word 'old' in the sentence 'He is 23 years old'.

Language use

Language use deals with the use of sentence patterns and grammar in writing composition. Based on the students' writing, the researchers discovered that the students had limited understanding of the uses of the simple present tense. This weakness is shown in the following examples:

1. She **wear** pink veil.... (S.2)
2. Tom Holland..... **Her** skin is white. (S.4)
3. **He** nose is sharp. (S.17)
4. She **is** black and long hair. (S.23)

The researchers found that in example 1 the students did not use the proper subject-verb agreement which requires using particles -s or -es in verbs after singular nouns. In examples 2 and 3, the students used the wrong possessive adjective and pronoun for a singular male subject. Example 4 indicated a mistake in the construction of a verbal sentence (inaccurate use of the nominal verb 'be' as the predicate of the sentence).

Content

A common problem found in the students' descriptive writing was the fact that the students did not write about the topic in detail; for example:

Jung Jaehyun

He is actor. his name is Jung Jaehyun He is hair brown. he has brown eyes. He is tall. He has round he has thick lips and he is handsome. (S.7)

In this sample paragraph, the writer did not arrange the descriptive text of the object clearly and in detail. The text showed that the student had difficulty in developing ideas.

Organisation

The students' writing also showed that they did not write the identification and description sequentially, which is a generic structure of descriptive texts. The following examples illustrate mistakes found in the students' writing regarding identification.

Raffi Ahmad

He is handsome Boys he body thin. He nose is sharp. His hair is short an black. His skin is light brown. He is artis indonesia. He is popular. his body short. his eyes is round. (S.17)

Maudy Ayunda

Maudy Ayunda is a beautiful girl. She is beautiful. She is very smart. His skin is white. She has black eyes. Her eyebrows is brown. She has pointed nose. She is black and long hair. His face is oval. She love his family. (S.23)

It can be seen from the samples above that the students' descriptive writing lacked coherence. The lack of paragraphing indicates that the identification and the description of the subject are not structured. Therefore, it is an indication that the students had difficulties in writing a descriptive text which follows the generic structure.

Mechanics

The mechanics of writing cover the appropriacy of punctuation use, spelling, and capitalisation. The students' writing indicated that they had a limited understanding of the proper uses of spelling, capitalisation or punctuation. The following are mistakes in mechanics found in the students' writing:

1. He was born in **a**ceh. (S.5)
2. She lives in **n**ganjuk. (S.2)
3. **he** is a **football** player. (S.18)
4. Amanda **m**anopo is my **v**avorite idol. (S.19)
5. He has thick lips **and** he is **h**andsome. (S.7)

6. He also has a **beutiful** smile (S.12)

Based on the examples, the students used lower case ‘h’ at the beginning of the sentence, the name of cities ‘a’ and ‘n’, and the name of a person ‘m’. The rules of mechanics in formal writing require using capital letters or uppercase at the beginning of a sentence. Furthermore, in example 5, the students did not use commas as punctuation before ‘and’, and in example 6, the students did not end the sentence with a period. The rules dictate that two clauses connected with coordinating conjunctions (*and, or, so* and *but*) must be separated by a comma, while sentences are closed with a period. Additionally, the students made mistakes in spelling the words *vavorite, footbal, hansome* and *beutiful*.

Factors Contributing to the Students’ Difficulties in Writing Descriptive Text

The questionnaire was designed to obtain information about the factors contributing to the students’ problems when writing descriptive text. From the analysis of the summary of the students’ responses, the research concluded several factors that contribute to the difficulties in writing descriptive text in the seventh grade of junior high school.

Is it difficult for you to use vocabulary that can describe people? Why?

Referring to the result of the questionnaire, all of the students answered that it was challenging for them to use vocabulary that describes people in descriptive text. In this case, the problem is the lack of vocabulary, since they know and remember only limited English vocabulary.

Is it difficult for you to write sentences in the simple present tense within descriptive text? Why?

The responses to the question indicated that most of the students found it difficult to produce sentences in the simple present tense. Having a limited understanding of the use of simple present tense, the students wrote erroneous sentences using the tense. Moreover, they found it challenging to distinguish verbs and adjectives. However, students S.1, S.9, S.12, S.19, S.20 and S.26 stated that they did not find it difficult to produce sentences in the simple present tense on descriptive text.

Is generating an idea to describe people in English written form difficult to do? Why?

Almost all of the students answered that it was difficult for them to generate ideas to describe people in written English. This fact indicated that the students lacked vocabulary and interest in learning English. Therefore, they found it challenging to write without proper knowledge of the English words. Meanwhile, S.1, S.16, S.20, S.22 and S.26 answered that they did not have a problem with generating an idea to describe people in written English.

Do you find it difficult to organise ideas based on the generic structure of a descriptive text? Why?

Almost all of the students claimed that it was difficult for them to organise ideas following the generic structure of a descriptive text because they could not distinguish and organise the sentences into identification and description based on

the descriptive text's generic structure. Only students S.2, S.5, S.9, S.16 and S.22 answered that they had no difficulties in organising ideas based on the generic structure in descriptive text.

Is it difficult for you to determine the uses of capital letters and punctuation in writing? Why?

Most of the students' responses indicated that they had problems distinguishing the uses of capital letters and punctuation. The reasons were the lack of knowledge in how to use them and lack of practice in writing. Students S.5, S.9, S.10, S.22, S.23 and S.26 answered that they had no difficulties in distinguishing the uses of capital letters and punctuation in writing.

Is it difficult to write English words with the right spelling? Why?

Almost all of the students found it difficult to write English words with the appropriate spelling because they were not accustomed to writing in English, they did not remember the spellings, and they did not have a dictionary. Hence, the students tended to write the words the way they hear them. Only student S.26 referred to the dictionary to write English words appropriately.

Do you get feedback on your writing from your teacher? Explain!

All of the students' responses indicated that they occasionally got the teacher's feedback on their writing in the form of corrections for inaccurate words or sentences and that they received less feedback for writing sentences.

Do you feel motivated when you get teachers' feedback on your writing result? Why?

All of the students felt motivated to write better after receiving feedback from the teacher. In addition, they found it easier to write after reflection on the feedback.

Moreover, the researchers observed that the teacher provided direct consultation during the writing practice. This was carried out by inspecting the students one by one. Hence, it can be said that the teacher helped the students during the writing practice by providing assistance and feedback in their practice.

DISCUSSION

The Difficulties Faced by Students in Writing Descriptive Text

The researchers discovered that the students met challenges when dealing with the vocabulary for writing descriptive text. This was evident in how students failed to use appropriate words or misspelled English words, resulting in erroneous sentences that did not reflect the idea or goal that they intended to convey. Additionally, language use was also a problem, because the researchers found grammatical errors in students' writing, ranging from misuse of the proper subject-verb agreement to inability to distinguish pronouns, verbs and adjectives. In the aspect of content, students could not arrange the descriptive text of the object clearly and in detail. The organisation was also a problem because students could not create and organise ideas based on the generic structure of the descriptive text that consists of identification and description. Problems in the mechanics were reflected by the

fact that almost all of the students made significant mistakes in punctuation, spelling and capitalisation. Moreover, the students did not consult the dictionary that would help them find the appropriate words for their descriptive writing. Only a handful of students brought and used their dictionaries during the writing process.

The findings are in line with Byrne (1988) who stipulates, as difficulties in writing, linguistic difficulty (vocabulary and language use) and cognitive difficulty (content, organisation, and mechanics). These difficulties were found in the students' writing. Furthermore, in line with Yoandita (2019), the difficulties that the students face in writing include generating and developing ideas, using the correct grammatical features, and using the appropriate mechanics of writing. Another study, by Alisha et al. (2019), finds that the most common difficulties students face in writing are a lack of vocabulary mastery and grammar. These mistakes indicate that students had a limited understanding of the descriptive text. Thus, it is suggested that the teacher explain carefully and pay more attention to these students' difficulties.

The Factors Contributing to the Students' Difficulties in Writing Descriptive Text

The questionnaire provided additional insights into the factors contributing to the students' difficulties in writing descriptive text. The results of the questionnaire showed similar difficulties faced by the students in the aspect of writing components. Other factors were related to the inability to recall vocabulary, a lack of understanding of the use of the simple present tense, and a lack of interest in learning English. These factors culminated in difficulty in executing writing assignments. In addition, distinguishing and organising sentences into identification and description in the descriptive text was challenging for the students because they were not accustomed to writing in English, they did not clearly remember the spelling, and they did not consult the dictionary when writing. It is suggested that the teacher give feedback and assist students in their writing so that they are more motivated to write better.

The results of the questionnaire showed that the teacher's brief feedback during the writing process might not help the students. In this case, peer-written feedback might help in the writing activity. This kind of feedback leads to the improvement of academic writing and serves as effective feedback for the students (Cui et al., 2021). While teacher instruction is still vital in the process of learning, peer feedback helps the students to recognise errors, and thus improves students' awareness when writing. In peer feedback, paired students discuss problems encountered and find ways together to improve their writing (Javadi-Safa, 2018). Therefore, if the students get writing feedback in detail, they will not make the same mistake in the future. Langan (2010) found that when the students want to produce a well-written product, they should make their best effort. Through doing a lot of writing practice and getting evaluation and feedback on their writing, students learn based on their writing experience.

The findings related to the factors contributing to the students' difficulties in writing descriptive text are in line with the findings of Byrne (1988). The difficulties are linguistic difficulty (vocabulary and language use), cognitive difficulty (content, organisation, and mechanics), and psychological difficulty (feedback). Furthermore, according to the findings of Budjalemba and Listyani

(2020), there are internal factors such as lack of self-confidence, lack of self-motivation, lack of knowledge, and the sense of being under pressure, as well as external factors such as the teachers' instructional methods, classroom setting, materials and aspects. Sari (2021) identifies various aspects that cause students to find it difficult to deal with problems related to language and organisation, including the lack of comprehension and knowledge about the goal and structure of the text.

Among the factors that contribute to the students' difficulties in writing descriptive text, the problem of understanding the materials might need to be addressed. It is suggested that the English teacher employ different methods and media to support teaching and learning activities. It is expected that diversification in methods and learning media help improve the students' motivation to learn English.

Muntiari & Megawati (2021) state that using media in the form of board games through the 'think talk write' (TTW) strategy can have a significant effect on developing English writing skills, especially in descriptive text. This is supported by the findings of Basri & Syamsia (2020), who found that students were enthusiastic and very creative in writing a descriptive text when they learned through mind-mapping strategy. It was found that the method gave a positive influence on learning effectively, smoothly and thoroughly.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study show that the students had some difficulties in writing descriptive text. These difficulties were linguistic (vocabulary and language use), cognitive (content, organisation and mechanics), and psychological (feedback). Dealing with the specific result, the lowest mean score was in the mechanics aspect (1.71), followed by organisation (2.11), vocabulary (2.29), language use (2.40) and content (2.75). Furthermore, other factors of students' difficulties were the lack of understanding of language use, of vocabulary, and of interest in learning English. These difficulties resulted in spelling errors and organisation problems related to identification and description. These factors were compounded by the fact that the students were not accustomed to writing in English and were not habituated to consulting the dictionary during writing class. Also, the teacher's feedback and communication with the students in their writing results or during the writing activities did not seem to be effective in practice.

There are implications for the education field based on the findings of this study. According to the findings, the students recognise what causes them difficulties in writing activity, and the teacher comprehends the factors that influence it. They should learn from their mistakes, difficulties and other factors, and thus the students will be able to improve their writing skill. Furthermore, guidance from the teacher must be added to their writing activity. This can be achieved by giving or creating more innovative and efficient teaching tools or media. It would establish an effective approach and communication that would enable the students to grasp the teacher's explanation easily and enhance their motivation to learn English.

This study was limited to analysing problems faced by students in writing descriptive text using a small number of participants at a particular junior high school from one province in Indonesia. It is necessarily recommended that further research work be pursued, using larger samples of Indonesian lower secondary level or any other level of students with the same or different text types. This will help in finding out about their difficulties as well as about strategies used by students in improving, and in overcoming, problems encountered in English writing.

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