



A STUDY ON THE RECOUNT TEXT WRITING ABILITY OF THE FIRST YEAR STUDENTS OF SMKN 1 PEKANBARU

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the writing ability level of first-year students at SMKN 1 Pekanbaru in composing recount texts. The population of this research consisted of 426 students. Using cluster random sampling, one class with 34 students was selected as the sample. The instrument used in this study was a writing test. To ensure validity, the students' writing results were assessed by three raters. The raters evaluated five aspects of recount text writing: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. Based on the results, among the five aspects, Mechanics received the highest average score of 80.59, categorized as Good, while Organization had the lowest average score of 70.98, which also falls into the Average category. The findings show that the overall writing ability of the students is at the Average level, with a mean score of 73.84.

Keywords: Study, Writing, Recount Text

SEBUAH STUDI TENTANG KEMAMPUAN MENULIS TEKS RECOUNT SISWA TAHUN PERTAMA SMKN 1 PEKANBARU

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui tingkat kemampuan menulis siswa tahun pertama di SMKN 1 Pekanbaru dalam menulis teks recount. Populasi dari penelitian ini terdiri dari 426 siswa. Dengan menggunakan teknik cluster random sampling, satu kelas yang berisi 34 siswa dipilih sebagai sampel. Instrumen yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah tes menulis. Untuk memastikan validitas, hasil tulisan siswa dinilai oleh tiga orang penilai (rater). Para penilai mengevaluasi lima aspek dalam penulisan teks recount, yaitu: isi, organisasi, kosakata, tata bahasa, dan mekanika. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kemampuan menulis siswa secara keseluruhan berada pada tingkat Rata-rata, dengan skor rata-rata sebesar 73,84. Dari kelima aspek tersebut, aspek Mekanika memperoleh skor rata-rata tertinggi yaitu 80,59 yang dikategorikan Baik, sementara aspek Organisasi memperoleh skor rata-rata terendah yaitu 70,98 yang juga termasuk dalam kategori Rata-rata.

Kata Kunci: Studi, Menulis, Teks Recount

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INTRODUCTION

Writing can be a benchmark for English language skills. A writer must be able to develop the ideas that



can relate to each other and when writing all elements of language skills need to be fully concentrated to achieve excellent results. Ganobscik & Williams (2009), on their recent studies, highlighted that writing plays a major role in higher education both in students' understanding of the course content and the consequent assessment of students' knowledge.

Writing is one of the English competencies which is important not only in formal however also informal situations. Based on Kaur and Saini (2014), Formal writing patterns are followed in respectable documents, studies papers, literary arts (i.e. poetry, novels, performs and stories). And an informal writing fashion consists of informal English sentences or terms with none restrictions. This kind of favor is followed in daily conversations, real-time data (like tweets, face book status, WhatsApp status, etc). Although students often write stories in informal writing, there are still difficulties that students through in writing.

A researcher may choose to conduct research on SMK (Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan) rather than SMA (Sekolah Menengah Atas) for several reasons, depending on the research objectives and focus. One key reason is SMK's emphasis on vocational and technical education, which prepares students for specific careers. According to Finch and Crunkilton (1999), vocational education aims to equip students with practical skills that meet industry needs, making SMK a valuable area of study for researchers focusing on workforce readiness and employability.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Writing

Writing is a crucial skill in English education. It involves forming letters or numbers on a surface, typically with a pen or pencil (Bull, 2010). Writing is an interpersonal communication system that uses visual or graphic symbols written on paper. According to Zamel (2007), Writing is a manner which the people can discover and find out their mind and thoughts in written form. Nunan (2003) explains that writing involves creating ideas, figuring out how to express them, and arranging them into clear sentences and paragraphs. According to Meyers (2005), writing is a natural way to produce language similar to speaking. It's a form of verbal communication with others. Writing is also a process of exploring and organizing your thoughts, putting them on paper, and refining and revising them.

Writing is a complex process that involves the ability to express thoughts, ideas, and information in a structured and coherent manner. According to Nunan (2003), writing is a process of thinking, drafting, and revising that requires cognitive effort and language proficiency. Similarly, Harmer (2004) states that writing is not merely about putting words on paper but also about organizing and structuring ideas effectively to communicate a clear message. Richards and Renandya (2002) emphasize that writing is one of the most challenging language skills because it involves generating ideas, organizing them logically, and using appropriate grammar and vocabulary. Furthermore, Brown (2001) highlights that writing is a recursive process



where writers continuously refine and improve their work through editing and revision. These perspectives illustrate that writing is more than just

2. Recount Text

Recount text is a type of writing that students often learn in school. Anderson and Kathy explain that recount is a piece of writing that talks about past events, usually in the order they happened. It's about retelling past experiences using language to keep the past alive and to interpret the experience. Because recount talks about past events, it uses past tenses. Another definition also states from that "speaking or writing about past events is called recount". They further explain that "A recount is a text that retells past events, usually in the order in which they occurred". Additionally, Goatly (2000) mentions that "Recount text is to assemble past experience by retelling activities and incidents in the order wherein they occurred." Recount text reconstructs past experience. In recount text form, students need to retell the series of activities or experiences they have had in the past (Nafisah & Kurniaw an, 2007,).

Recount text is a type of text that retells past events in a chronological order, aiming to inform or entertain the reader. Similarly, Hyland (2004) defines recount text as a genre that reconstructs past experiences through a structured narrative, often including personal reflections. Knapp and Watkins (2005) emphasize that recount text is characterized by its use of the past tense, time connectors, and a clear chronological sequence to ensure coherence. These expert perspectives illustrate that recount text is an essential genre in literacy development, helping learners enhance their narrative skills by organizing past events logically and coherently

RESEARCH METHOD

The research design was used as a descriptive quantitative approach. So, this study was designed to determine the recount text writing ability of the first-year students of SMKN1 Pekanbaru. Population refers to the entire group of individuals, objects, or events that share common characteristics and from which a sample is drawn for study. According to Creswell (2012), a population is a group of individuals with shared traits relevant to a research problem, and researchers often select a subset (sample) from this population to make generalizations. The population of this research was the students of the first year from SMKN 1 Pekanbaru.

The researcher used cluster random sampling technique to choose the class to be the sample. According to Sugiyono (2017), cluster sampling is the sampling method where different groups within a population are used as a sample. Cluster random is the selection of groups, or cluster of subjects rather than individuals (Fraenkel, 2000). In other word, the total population divided into groups (clusters) and a simple random of group is selected.

In choosing the class, the writer used lottery. The researcher gave twelve pieces of papers to each leader



from twelve classes. One paper was written “Sample” on it while the others was not. Then, the class leaders were asked to take the rolled papers. The sample of this research was being determined by the class leader who take the paper with a word “Sample” written on it. On this research, there only chose one class as the sample of the research.

Three raters validated and measured the score of the sample in writing a recount text. The researcher used a descriptive quantitative method. The researcher used a descriptive quantitative method to analyze writing test and it was explained it descriptively. This method was used to explain students’ ability in writing recount text. To measure the ability of writing, the researcher had to realize the error made by the sample. The error was corrected by raters then the researcher calculated the result in this research.

There were several criteria used to assess the students' recount texts. According to Brown (2007), these criteria include content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics, with each level having its own scoring system. The writer evaluated the data based on these five aspects, which determine the score for writing a recount text.

After gaining students’ total score, the researcher classified the ability level of writing ability of the students by using this following classification.

Table 1 Level of Writing Ability

No	Score Range	Level
1.	0 – 59	Very Poor
2.	60 – 69	Poor
3.	70 – 79	Average
4.	80 – 89	Good
5.	90 – 100	Excellent

(Brown, 2007)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To find out the writing ability of first-year students at SMK N 1 Pekanbaru, the researcher conducted a study in class X BDP, which has 34 students. The researcher asked the students to choose one topic from three given topics and write a recount text based on their chosen topic. The students' answers were then checked by three raters using the scoring criteria from Brown (2007). According to Brown, a good recount text should have well-organized content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. The results are presented as follows



1. Students' Individual Scores

The researcher presents the data, which consists of the individual scores of the students. These scores are taken from their work on a recount text. This step helps to show each student's performance before further analysis is conducted.

Table 2 Students' Recount Text Writing Ability

No	Scores Classification	Frequency	Percentage	Level	Mean Score
1	0-59	2	5.88%	Very poor	73.84
2	60-69	2	5.88%	Poor	
3	70-79	26	76.47%	Average	
4	80-89	4	11.76%	Good	
5	90-100	0	0.00%	Excellent	
Total		34	100%		

The results show that 2 students (5.88%) fall into the Very poor level with scores ranging from 0 to 59. Similarly, 2 students (5.88%) are in the Poor level with scores between 60 and 69. A large portion of the students, 26 out of 34 (76.47%), are categorized as Average, having scores from 70 to 79. Meanwhile, 4 students (11.76%) achieved scores between 80 and 89, placing them in the Good level. None of the students reached the Excellent level. Based on the average score of 73.84, the students' overall writing ability is classified into Average.

After getting each student's score in writing a recount text, the researcher continued the analysis by grouping the scores. The scores were organized based on five aspects of writing: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. The tables are presented as follows.

2. The Result of Content Aspect

Table 3 The Students' Writing Ability in Content Aspect

No	Scores Classification	Frequency	Percentage	Level	Mean Score
1	0-59	2	5.88%	Very poor	74.31
2	60-69	7	20.59%	Poor	



3	70-79	8	23.53%	Average	
4	80-89	16	47.06%	Good	
5	90-100	1	2.94%	Excellent	
Total		34	100%		

Based on table 1.3, 2 students (5.88%) are at the Very poor level with scores between 0–49. Then, 7 students (20.59%) are at the Poor level with scores between 50–59. At the Average level, 8 students (23.53%) scored between 60–74. The highest number of students, 16 (47.06%), are in the Good level with scores between 75–89. Lastly, only 1 student (2.94%) reached the Excellent level with a score between 90–100. From the mean score of 74.31, it can be concluded that the overall student performance is categorized as Average. This result may be due to students being able to write relevant ideas and provide a basic structure of events, but they often lack detailed development and supporting information. Their writing usually includes general information and simple event descriptions without much elaboration, which limits the depth and richness of the content. An example sentence that reflects this average level is: *"Last weekend, I went to the beach with my family. We played games and ate food. It was fun."* This sentence shows a clear recount of an event, but it lacks specific details and personal reflection that would raise the quality to a higher level.

3. The Result of Organization Aspect

Table 4 The Students' Writing Ability in Organization Aspect

No	Scores Classification	Frequency	Percentage	Level	Mean Score
1	0-59	2	5.88%	Very poor	70.98
2	60-69	14	41.18%	Poor	
3	70-79	8	23.53%	Average	
4	80-89	10	29.41%	Good	
5	90-100	0	0.00%	Excellent	
Total		34	100%		

The table 1.4 shows that 2 students, or 5.88%, are placed in the Very poor level with scores between 0 and 59. A larger group of 14 students (41.18%) belongs to the Poor level, scoring between



60 and 69. Meanwhile, 8 students (23.53%) achieved scores from 70 to 79, which places them in the Average level. In addition, 10 students (29.41%) are categorized as Good with scores ranging from 80 to 89. None of the students reached the Excellent level, as no one scored between 90 and 100. With an average score of 70.98, the overall writing ability of the students falls into the Average level. This result suggests that while students are generally able to arrange their ideas in a logical sequence, they often struggle with creating smooth transitions between events and maintaining a clear structure throughout the text. Their writing typically includes a beginning, middle, and end, but the flow between paragraphs may feel abrupt or underdeveloped. For example, a sentence like *"First, we arrived at the zoo. Then we saw many animals. After that, we went home."* shows that the student can organize events chronologically, but the lack of coherence and detailed connection between ideas reflects an average level of organization.

4. The Result of Vocabulary Aspect

Table 5 The Students' Writing Ability in Vocabulary Aspect

No	Scores Classification	Frequency	Percentage	Level	Mean Score
1	0-59	0	0.00%	Very poor	72.75
2	60-69	11	32.35%	Poor	
3	70-79	12	35.29%	Average	
4	80-89	11	32.35%	Good	
5	90-100	0	0.00%	Excellent	
Total		34	100%		

The results indicate that none of the students fall into the Very poor level (0–59), accounting for 0% of the total. A total of 11 students, representing 32.35%, are classified into the Poor level with scores ranging from 60 to 69. The majority of students, 12 out of 34 (35.29%), achieved scores within the 70 to 79 range, placing them in the Average level. An additional 11 students (32.35%) reached the Good level, with scores between 80 and 89. No students attained the Excellent level (90–100), resulting in 0% for this level. Based on the calculated mean score of 72.75, it can be concluded that the overall writing proficiency of the students is categorized as Average.

The vocabulary aspect in the study on students' ability in writing recount texts received a



score of 72.75, which is considered average. This indicates that students are able to use basic and familiar words to express their ideas, but their vocabulary is often limited and repetitive. They tend to rely on common words and may have difficulty selecting more precise or varied vocabulary to convey meaning effectively. As a result, their writing lacks richness and variety in word choice. An example of this average level can be seen in a sentence like: *"I was very happy because the place was very good and the people were very nice."* The overuse of the word "very" and general adjectives such as "good" and "nice" show a limited range of vocabulary, which contributes to the average rating in this aspect.

5. The Result of Grammar Aspect

Table 6 The Students' Writing Ability in Grammar Aspect

No	Scores Classification	Frequency	Percentage	Level	Mean Score
1	0-59	1	2.94%	Very Poor	73.73
2	60-69	13	38.24%	Poor	
3	70-79	9	26.47%	Average	
4	80-89	9	26.47%	Good	
5	90-100	2	5.88%	Excellent	
Total		34	100%		

The data reveals that one student (2.94%) is categorized as Very poor, having obtained a score within the range of 0–59. A total of 13 students (38.24%) falls under the Poor level, with scores between 60 and 69. Nine students (26.47%) achieved scores from 70 to 79, placing them in the Average level. An equal number of students, nine (26.47%), are classified into the Good level, with scores ranging from 80 to 89. Additionally, two students (5.88%) reached the Excellent level by obtaining scores between 90 and 100. Based on the mean score of 73.73, it can be concluded that the overall writing ability of the students is at the Average level. This suggests that students have a basic understanding of grammatical rules, especially in using past tense verbs, which are essential in recount texts. However, their writing often contains several grammatical errors, such as incorrect verb forms, subject-verb agreement issues, and problems with sentence structure. These errors do not always interfere with meaning, but they do affect the overall clarity and accuracy of the text. For instance, a sentence like: *"Yesterday I go to the market and buy many food. It was make me happy."*



demonstrates an average level, as it shows an attempt to use past tense but contains noticeable errors in verb usage and sentence construction.

6. The Result of Mechanics Aspect

Table 7 The Students' Writing Ability in Mechanics Aspect

No	Scores Classification	Frequency	Percentage	Level	Mean Score
1	0-59	0	0.00%	Very poor	80.59
2	60-69	2	5.88%	Poor	
3	70-79	6	17.65%	Average	
4	80-89	22	64.71%	Good	
5	90-100	4	11.76%	Excellent	
Total		34	100%		

The findings indicate that none of the students (0%) fell into the Very poor level, with scores ranging from 0 to 59. A small proportion of students, specifically 2 individuals (5.88%), were categorized at the Poor level, scoring between 60 and 69. Meanwhile, 6 students (17.65%) obtained scores within the 70 to 79 range, placing them in the Average level. The majority of students, 22 out of 34 (64.71%), achieved scores between 80 and 89, thus being classified into Good level. Additionally, 4 students (11.76%) reached the Excellent level with scores ranging from 90 to 100. Based on the calculated mean score of 80.59, it can be concluded that the overall writing performance of the students falls within the Good level. This result indicates that most students are able to apply basic writing conventions such as punctuation, capitalization, and spelling with a relatively high degree of accuracy. While minor errors may still occur, they are not frequent and do not significantly interfere with the reader's understanding. The students show awareness of when to use capital letters, periods, commas, and proper spelling, which contributes to clearer and more readable texts. An example of a sentence at this good level is: *"On Saturday, my family and I visited my grandmother's house in the village."* This sentence shows correct use of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling, reflecting the students' competence in writing mechanics.

Discussion

This research was conducted to examine the recount text writing ability of first-year students at SMK Negeri 1 Pekanbaru. The study involved 34 students whose writing was assessed by three raters based on five



writing aspects: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. Each aspect was scored individually and then analyzed to determine which components were students' strengths and weaknesses. The overall goal was to identify the students' level of writing proficiency and understand areas for improvement.

The findings revealed that among the five assessed aspects, mechanics received the highest mean score of 80.59, which falls into the Good level. In this aspect, none of the students (0%) were in the Very poor level. Only 2 students (5.88%) were at the Poor level, and 6 students (17.65%) were at the Average level. The majority of students, 22 (64.71%), were classified into the Good level, while 4 students (11.76%) reached the Excellent level. This shows that most students have a good understanding of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization rules when writing a recount text.

In contrast, the organization aspect received the lowest average score of 70.98, which is categorized as Average. In this aspect, 2 students (5.88%) were in the Very poor level, and 14 students (41.18%) were in the Poor level. Meanwhile, 8 students (23.53%) reached the Average level. A total of 10 students (29.41%) managed to achieve the Good level, but none of the students reached the Excellent level. These results suggest that students found it more difficult to organize their ideas logically and connect sentences smoothly in their recount writing.

There may be several reasons why the mechanics aspect had the highest score. One possible explanation is that mechanics can be learned through repeated correction and practice, such as exercises in punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. These rules are often taught consistently during English lessons and are easier to master with practice. Moreover, mechanics does not require deep thinking or creativity, unlike content or organization, making it simpler for students to understand and apply correctly.

On the other hand, the low performance in the organization aspect may be due to students' limited experience in structuring their ideas when writing. Writing with proper structure—such as writing a clear orientation, sequence of events, and reorientation in a recount text—requires critical thinking, coherence, and planning. These skills take more time to develop and may not be emphasized enough in the classroom. As a result, many students struggle to present their ideas in a logical and cohesive order.

After analyzing all aspects, the total mean score of the students' writing was 73.84. This score places their overall writing performance at the Average level. Based on the score distribution, 2 students (5.88%) were in the Very poor level, and another 2 students (5.88%) were in the Poor level. Most of the students, 26 out of 34 (76.47%), were in the Average level. Only 4 students (11.76%) achieved the Good level, and no students reached the Excellent level. The average score of this study may be influenced by several factors. First, as first-year students, they are still developing their basic writing skills in English, including grammar, vocabulary, and text organization. Second, limited exposure to English outside the classroom may affect their ability to practice and improve. Third, their background knowledge of recount text structure might be basic, resulting in simple



content and less-developed ideas. Additionally, a lack of confidence and motivation in using a foreign language could also contribute to the average performance. These factors combined suggest that while students show potential, they still need more guidance and practice to reach higher levels of writing proficiency. These findings indicate that while students are capable of writing recount texts, there is still room for improvement, especially in organizing ideas and vocabulary development.

When comparing this research with previous studies, some similarities and differences can be observed. For example, Nursalimah and Muljanto (2020) found that project-based learning helped improve students' writing of recount texts, especially in content and vocabulary. Similarly, Susanti & Agung (2023) reported that using Google Jamboard was effective in helping students organize their writing ideas. Meanwhile, Mudakir (2023) showed that diary writing helped students become more fluent and confident in writing recount texts. These findings support the idea that using creative and interactive methods can enhance students' writing performance.

In contrast, Shalihah (2022) and Aziez (2016) highlighted students' struggles, especially with grammar and organization, which aligns with the current study's findings. While this research showed students excelled in mechanics, both Shalihah and Aziez observed persistent interlanguage errors and difficulties in structuring ideas. Despite the different methods and tools used in those studies, all of them emphasize the need for more focused instruction in writing structure and grammar. Overall, it can be concluded that the recount text writing ability of first-year students at SMK Negeri 1 Pekanbaru is at the Average level.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the overall writing ability of first-year students at SMK Negeri 1 Pekanbaru in composing recount texts falls within the Average level, as indicated by the mean score of 73.84. Among the five assessed components—Content, Organization, Vocabulary, Grammar, and Mechanics—the Mechanics aspect achieved the highest average score of 80.59, which is categorized as Good. This result suggests that students generally demonstrate adequate mastery in the technical aspects of writing, such as punctuation, spelling, and capitalization. In contrast, the Organization aspect recorded the lowest mean score of 70.98, placing it in the Average level. This indicates that students encountered greater challenges in structuring their ideas coherently and logically throughout their texts. The disparity in these results may be attributed to the more procedural nature of mechanics, which can be improved through consistent practice and correction, whereas effective organization requires higher-order thinking skills and familiarity with text structure. To address this issue, it is recommended that educators place greater instructional emphasis on teaching organizational strategies through the use of scaffolding techniques, model texts, and structured planning activities. This approach may enhance students' ability to construct more logically organized and



cohesive recount texts.

This research gives some recommendations for the writer, students and teachers. Following the findings that indicate students' ability to write recount texts is at an average level, it is recommended that the researcher further investigates instructional strategies that may enhance students' writing performance. Future studies should consider integrating more varied teaching techniques, such as process-based writing or collaborative learning, to address students' specific writing challenges. Additionally, refining the research design particularly in terms of assessment tools and sampling may provide deeper insights and more reliable data in subsequent investigations.

Then, the results of this study may serve as a valuable reference for students in other vocational schools. Given that the average level of writing proficiency was observed, it is advised that students consistently practice writing recount texts to enhance their linguistic and organizational skills. Exposure to authentic materials, peer-review activities, and regular feedback from teachers can significantly support students in progressing beyond the average level of competence in writing.

It also expected that English teachers are encouraged to adopt innovative and student-centered approaches in teaching recount texts. Emphasizing structured writing practice, contextual learning, and formative assessment may lead to improvements in students' writing outcomes. Furthermore, researchers interested in the field of writing instruction are recommended to replicate or extend this study in different educational contexts or with varied text types. They can also conduct similar research in different schools or with different writing genres to get more comprehensive results.

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