

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

In the Indonesian educational context, writing skill is one of the four essential competencies stated in the English curriculum for junior high schools. In Grade VIII (Phase D), the curriculum requires students to achieve the Capaian Pembelajaran (CP) in writing, which includes expressing ideas in a well-organized text for communication (Aprila et al. 2024). Specifically, eighth-grade students are introduced to recount text, which focuses on retelling past experiences in chronological order through three main parts: orientation, events, and reorientation (Ratna Sari & Siregar, 2022). In the context of English language teaching, the Kurikulum Merdeka positions writing as a key competency that integrates linguistic accuracy, creative expression, and communicative effectiveness.

Despite the curriculum's emphasis on writing, many students continue to face difficulties when composing recount text, particularly in constructing grammatically correct sentences, organizing ideas coherently, and applying appropriate vocabulary (Fareed et al., 2016). Writing is widely acknowledged as one of the most challenging skills for EFL learners. Recent studies from previous researcher consistently report that junior high school students tend to face difficulties across multiple aspects of writing (Lestari & Novari, 2022). Common problems include limited ability to elaborate ideas (content), unclear text structure (organization), insufficient vocabulary to express thoughts precisely (vocabulary),

inaccurate use of grammar especially simple past tense (language), and mechanical errors such as misspellings and incorrect punctuation (mechanics). These findings indicate that writing difficulties among students are multidimensional. Some of the most frequent difficulties included the misuse of simple past tense, limited vocabulary, disorganized sentence structure, and mechanical errors such as incorrect spelling and punctuation. In addition to linguistic problems, several students also experienced non-linguistic difficulties such as lack of motivation, and low self-confidence when asked to write in English (Amalina & Yulianto, 2024). These problems indicate that writing remains one of the most demanding language skills for students learning English as a foreign language. The difficulties observed during the PLP align with the theoretical explanations discussed in previous studies, which show that students commonly struggle in five major components of writing: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics (Khairunnisaak et. al 2022). These components are essential aspects of writing quality, particularly in genre-based writing such as recount text, and have been widely used by researchers as indicators to measure students writing performance.

In relation to recount writing specifically, Kurikulum Merdeka requires students to retell personal experiences in a coherent sequence, showing understanding of textual structure (orientation–events–reorientation), past tense forms, temporal connectors, and descriptive detail. These competencies are aligned with the curriculum's goals of fostering meaningful communication, narrative competence, and linguistic awareness. Nonetheless, research shows that many junior high school learners still struggle with recount writing due to limited

vocabulary, incorrect grammar especially past tense poor organization, and weak mechanics. This mismatch reinforces the need for empirical investigation into students actual difficulties so that teachers can design writing instruction aligned with Kurikulum Merdeka's vision for literacy development.

Previous studies have confirmed that writing difficulties among EFL students are not unique to a specific school or region but are commonly found across different educational contexts (Raofi et al., 2017). Research has shown that many students have problems in developing ideas, applying grammatical rules, and selecting suitable vocabulary when writing (Fadda, 2012). These findings suggest that EFL learners often lack the necessary linguistic competence and writing strategies required to produce clear and accurate written texts. Consequently, identifying the types of writing difficulties and understanding their underlying causes are crucial for improving the effectiveness of writing instruction.

Therefore, this research is conducted to analyze the difficulties experienced by eighth-grade students in writing recount text at SMP Negeri 10 Tanjungpinang. The research aims to describe the types of difficulties students face, examine the contributing factors, and explore how students attempt to overcome these problems. It is expected that the findings of this research will provide useful insights for English teachers to better understand their students challenges in writing and to design more effective teaching strategies that can improve students writing performance, particularly in the context of junior high school education in Indonesia (Multazim & Husna 2019).

1.2 Identification of the Problem

Based on the results of the pre-observation conducted by the researcher during the Introduction to the School Field program (PLP) at SMP Negeri 10 Tanjungpinang, several problems related to students writing ability were identified as follows:

1. Many students experience difficulties in using the correct grammar, especially simple past tense, when writing recount text.
2. Students have limited vocabulary that makes it difficult for them to express ideas effectively.
3. Many students show low motivation when writing in English.

1.3 Limitation of the Problem

This study is limited to identifying students difficulties in writing recount text based on the five aspects proposed by Khairunnisaak et al. (2022) content, organization, vocabulary, language, and mechanics the factors causing them, and how students attempt to overcome them..

1.4 Research Questions

What difficulties do the eighth-grade students face in writing recount text at SMP Negeri 10 Tanjungpinang?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The study aims, as outlined by the researcher, are as follows:

To analyze the difficulties faced by the eighth grade students in writing recount text.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Teachers, students, and future researchers are expected to gain benefits from this research, as described below:

1. For students the results of this study are expected to help students recognize and understand the specific difficulties they face in writing recount text. By being aware of their challenges, students can improve their writing performance and develop more effective strategies to overcome their problems in learning English.
2. For teachers this study can provide useful information for English teachers about the common difficulties encountered by students in writing recount text. The findings may help teachers design more effective teaching techniques and classroom activities that can support students in mastering writing skills.
3. For future researchers the findings of this research can serve as a reference for future studies related to students writing difficulties, especially in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It may also inspire other researchers to explore different perspectives or variables in the field of writing instruction.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

1.7.1 Students Difficulties

Students difficulties refer to the problems or obstacles faced by students when writing in English. These difficulties may include linguistic aspects such as content, organization, vocabulary, language, and mechanics.

1.7.2 Writing Skill

Writing skill refers to the ability of students to express their ideas, experiences, and opinions in a written form using content, organization, vocabulary, language, and mechanics. In this study, writing skill focuses on how students compose a recount text in English.

1.7.3 Recount Text

Recount text is a type of text that tells about past experiences or events in chronological order. It generally consists of three parts: orientation, events, and reorientation. In this research, recount text is used as the main object to identify the students difficulties in writing.