

The Profile of the Ninth Graders' Narrative Writing Texts in the Secondary EFL Classroom

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Abstrak

Menulis dalam bahasa Inggris merupakan salah satu keterampilan berbahasa yang dianggap sulit oleh peserta didik. Menulis bahkan menjadi keterampilan yang menantang dikarenakan adanya kesulitan-kesulitan terkait psikologis, linguistik, dan kognitif. Teks naratif dipilih sebagai jenis teks yang diteliti dalam penelitian ini karena teks ini akrab dengan dunia peserta didik. Penelitian ini lebih lanjut bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan (1) profil teks naratif hasil tulisan peserta didik kelas IX di konteks kelas *EFL* dan (2) kesulitan-kesulitan yang dihadapi oleh peserta didik kelas IX dalam menulis teks naratif di konteks kelas *EFL*. Terkait dengan dua tujuan penelitian tersebut, penelitian ini dikategorikan sebagai penelitian deskriptif kualitatif. Adapun data dari penelitian ini adalah teks naratif hasil tulisan peserta didik kelas IX dan respon peserta didik tentang kesulitan-kesulitan yang mereka hadapi selama proses menulis teks naratif di konteks kelas *EFL*. Kedua data tersebut diperoleh melalui teknik penugasan menulis teks naratif dan interview. Setelah semua data diperoleh, peneliti kemudian menganalisis data tersebut. Hasil dari analisis data akhirnya menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar peserta didik dapat mengembangkan teks naratif dengan baik dengan cara mengikuti aturan penulisan teks naratif, misalnya dengan mengikuti struktur teks naratif, menggunakan kata-kata, struktur kalimat serta teknik penulisan yang tepat, dll. Meskipun demikian, sayangnya, beberapa kesulitan masih saja ditemukan selama proses menulis teks naratif, misalnya, kurangnya motivasi menulis yang akhirnya dapat menyebabkan peserta didik kurang percaya diri dalam menulis teks naratif, kecenderungan menggunakan bahasa ibu dalam tulisan teks naratif mereka, dll.

Kata Kunci: teks naratif, kesulitan dalam menulis teks naratif, konteks kelas *EFL*

Abstract

Writing is one of the language skills that students consider difficult when learning English. Writing becomes challenging due to psychological, linguistic, and cognitive problems. Narrative text was chosen as the type of text that was researched in this present study since it is familiar to students' world. This research further aims to describe (1) the profile of the ninth graders' narrative writing texts in the secondary EFL classroom and (2) the difficulties encountered by the ninth graders in writing narrative text in the secondary EFL classroom. In line with those research objectives, this present study was therefore descriptive qualitative. The data for the first research question were in the form of students' written words, sentences, phrases, and paragraphs that were taken from their narrative writing text results. While for the second research question, the data were in the form of students' responses regarding their difficulties in writing narrative text in the secondary EFL classroom that were obtained from interview. After all the data for the present study were collected, the researcher then analyzed those data. The results of the study revealed that students mostly could develop their ideas well by organizing and writing those ideas into a coherent content and text structure of narrative text and utilizing appropriate diction (vocabulary), language use, and writing mechanics. However, some difficulties were still found during the process of writing, for example, lack of motivation, lack of confidence in writing, and the influence of the first language on writing in English.

Keywords: narrative writing text, difficulties in writing narrative text, secondary EFL classroom.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the language skills that students consider difficult when learning English. Considering its complexity, writing is regarded as the most challenging skill to master. It is usually caused by writing processes that take longer time to think and present ideas. It is proven by Oshima and Hogue in their book *Writing Academic English* that writing is a process not a product (Oshima & Hogue, 1999). The process requires a thorough

comprehension of the subject matter and multiple sources that can support the topic. The students are not only required to write, but they are also expected to organize their thoughts into a good paragraph, which is a difficult task.

When a written communication could not be conveyed orally under a specific circumstance, writing is used. By putting thoughts into writing, readers can understand them. Students must therefore present their ideas in a clear

concept and structure if they want to be understood by others. Writing becomes challenging due to psychological, linguistic, and cognitive problems (Byrne, 1997). In psychological problem, writing is essentially a solitary activity without possibility of interaction or benefits of feedback; this makes the act of writing difficult. In linguistic problem the writer has to keep the channel of a communication open through his own effort and ensure both through his choice of sentences structure and through the way his sentences are linked together and sequenced. In cognitive problem, on the other hand, writing is learned to a process of instruction. The writer has to master the written form of the language and to learn certain structures. The writer also learns how to organize the ideas in such a way to be understood by the reader. Writing skills possessed by a person are obtained through intensive practice. The ability to write is not a skill passed down from generation to generation but is the result of a process of learning and perseverance in practice (Wijekumar, 2019).

In the current study, narrative texts were selected as the text type under study since it is familiar to students' world, which could also attract students to write narrative text. Besides, narration or stories can entertain, teach, explain, and persuade. The generic structure of narrative text consists of orientation, complication, resolution, and coda (Depdiknas, 2006). When we have a clue to start writing, we can finish the narrative text successfully. A topic sentence will help us to choose relevant information. The result of narrative text activities is a form of writing that expresses the thoughts and feelings of writing or the author in a unified whole (Martin, et. al. 2018).

Writing narrative texts is a practical challenge for junior high school students, especially in terms of their writing abilities. These students are in grade nine. It was discovered that a large number of students still struggle with writing narrative texts. It can be the result of the students' ignorance of narrative text grammar. They struggle to formulate well-chosen sentences, and their limited vocabulary may also hinder their writing skills. According to Harmer (2005), students struggled with spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and lettering in written texts. While psychological difficulties, linguistic difficulties (vocabulary and language use), and cognitive difficulties (content, structure, and technical) are Byrne (1997)'s three main writing challenges. The researcher aims to describe the profile of the ninth graders' narrative writing texts in the secondary EFL classroom and the difficulties encountered by the ninth graders in writing narrative text in the secondary EFL classroom. Therefore, the researcher conducted research entitled *The Profile of the Ninth Graders' Narrative Writing Texts in the Secondary EFL Classroom*.

METHOD

This research is descriptive qualitative research since it aims to describe the profile of the ninth graders' narrative writing texts in the secondary EFL classroom and the difficulties encountered by the ninth graders in writing narrative text in the secondary EFL classroom. The subjects of this study were 9 selected ninth-graders in a particular state junior high school in Surabaya. They were selected due to the teacher's advice and suggestion (i.e., high achievers, moderate achievers, and low achievers). Referring to the research questions, the data for the first research question were in the form of students' written words, sentences, phrases, and paragraphs that were taken from their narrative writing text results. While for the second research question, the data were in the form of students' responses regarding their difficulties in writing narrative text in the secondary EFL classroom that were obtained from interview. After all the data for the present study were collected, the researcher then analyzed those data. The data that were obtained from students' narrative writing text results were analyzed by using writing rubric adapted from Heaton (1988) and categorized into excellent to very good, good to average, fair to poor, and very poor levels. While the data collected from the interview were analyzed using data analysis stages as listed by Ary, et al. (2010), they are: familiarizing and organizing, coding and reducing, and interpreting and representing the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section describes the results of students' narrative writing text and interviews. The results of students' narrative writing texts were used as data to answer the first research question of this study, which is to describe the profile of the ninth graders' narrative writing texts in the secondary EFL classroom. Meanwhile, to answer the second research question, interview was employed. This is to describe the difficulties encountered by the ninth graders in writing narrative text in the secondary EFL classroom.

1. The Profile of the Ninth Graders' Narrative Writing Texts in the Secondary EFL Classroom

Related to the first research objective, which aims to investigate the profile of the ninth graders' narrative writing texts in the secondary EFL classroom, the researcher analyzed the students' narrative writing text results by utilizing a rubric adapted from Heaton (1988). The rubric was the instrument used by the researcher in analyzing nine students' narrative writing text results. Here, the components that the researcher analyzed include content, organization, language use, vocabulary (diction), and mechanics. Each component has four categories:

excellent to very good, good to average, fair to poor, and very poor. The followings are some of the results of students' narrative writing text.

Analysis on Student 1's narrative writing result

In terms of the content, not many characters were used in this story, but the roles among the characters were very effective and contributed evenly to the story. The writer only highlighted two characters, Mali Baya and Malin Kundang, who have a close mother-son relationship. The problem used was the problem of a child's delinquency that is common, but with this simple problem the writer could convey the meaning of obedience well. The story was resolved with a happy ending as Mali managed to save her son, making their lives harmonious once the problem was solved. The substance was quite simple but contributed greatly to each part.

"Mali's old age felt sad lamenting his fate". And "One day. Mali baya Invited malin kundang to plow the fields". Dealing with language use, those are the transitions used by the writer to move from orientation to complication. The writer used the end to explain Mali's old condition and laments his fate that leads to poverty, then continued with Mali's invitation to her son to help her work in the fields. This is an example of a good transition that did not make the readers wondered about the move. So, it can be concluded that this story is quite easy to read, and does not make the readers think long to digest the whole story, evidenced by the highlighted excerpts from the story.

"In a village, there lived an old woman named Mali Baya and her son named Malin Kundang" and "one day" were efficient but quite simple sentence. It could still be developed by adding the weather on that day, what village they lived in, and other additions so that the story could go alive later. The generic structure above is very complete, start from orientation, complication, resolution, and coda (moral message) which makes the readers not leave many questions after reading it.

Regarding the vocabulary, the Malin Kundang story did not use many idioms or expressions that could make the story more interesting and dramatic, still used simple language like other texts. Whereas narrative texts should contain beauty in every sentence.

The mechanics aspect was quite good, the way of writing punctuation and capital letters still needs improvement, such as "mali baya and her son named malin kundang" which did not use capital letters in writing the name, and "One day." which should use a comma, not a period.

Analysis on Student 5's narrative writing result

Deal with the content delivered, the story was about a different perspective on life. The guilt of each character

was raised as the title, and was enough to make the readers amazed by the writer's creativity that was beyond reason. However, the core of the problem solving was not so good, the writer's execution in solving the problem was only with Astha's words saying that the three characters were guilty, but did not explain the guilt at all, even bringing in a new character, the police, whose background was not explained at all. Even so, the context of free life carried in this story should be appreciated because it was easily understood by the readers. The use of characters and places was quite creative, though not very effective. Only Naresha was fully explained about her life and her outlook on life, which eventually became the issue of the story.

In terms of the language use, it was simple and concise, but there were several sentences that were ambiguous. As in the following sentence "Astha said this village would be very crowded and crowded. Then as the names this village salatiga which meant three wrong people. The three wrong people are the chief, his wife, and the robbers", the readers would be confused in understanding the story conveyed by the writer. Those sentences showed the confusion of the story being conveyed because of the busyness of the people in the story that was conveyed directly referring to the reader's naming of the city of Salatiga that had been told, caused confusion about the story the writer told.

Related to the organization of the plot, it was still lacking, even though the writer had classified the structure of the story she conveyed. So that results in the chronology of the story. There was some confusion that occurred in the plot conveyed to the writer of the story she made. The context of Astha's life is a situation that needs to be explained in more detail, so that the readers can easily understand why Astha wants to live like Naresha, and how she can think of it so easily. This situation is at the core of the relationship between the writer and the readers, which is the ease with which the writer conveys to the readers about the background and the problem she is creating. So, the readers need to use a little logic to connect the storyline.

Concerning vocabulary used, it was quite good, but the writer had not given a timed statement in each paragraph delivered, so that it has an impact on the use of language that referred to the tense used by the writer.

In terms of mechanics word and sentence fragmentation, it was still lacking, because the writer was still confused in creating her story. The sentence fragments that affect the punctuation was like the following: "Then the wife of the village head asked Naresha abimana to help her cut the grass without revealing her real name. Naresha abimana began to work cutting grass to be used as fodder for the village head's horses". The sentence should had been after the word and then given a comma in the story, but the writer still had not given it. So that results in the following sentences. Sometimes in several places the rights

had not been given in the form of sentence fragmentation and punctuation.

Analysis on Student 9's narrative writing result

The content in the story above was very low, because the story was only 1 paragraph and there was no clear explanation of the text structure of narrative text and the story was very simple, there was no complex complication and the end was very simple. As it could be seen from the beginning of the paragraph "One afternoon there was a fox that was walking through the forest and spotted a bunch of grapes hanging from over a lofty branch. Just the thing to quench my thirst," quoted the fox". From these sentences there was no sentence at the beginning that made the story interesting. A story with one character should provide a complex background, but this was not well explained in the story. The story was also not well developed, making it less interesting to read.

Related to language use, the language used was quite clear and good, as it could be seen from the sentence "Taking a few steps backward, the fox jumped but unfortunately he missed the hanging grapes. Again the fox took a few paces backward, ran, and tried to reach them but he still failed."

Deal with organization, the flow was built quite well, but too short. Weak transitions left the readers felt confused with lots of questions. This could have been seen from the sentence "Just the thing to quench my thirst," quoted by the fox. Because the story was short, the readers felt that the scene changes were too fast; so, to understand it well, it still requires creativity from the readers to develop it.

Meanwhile for the vocabulary aspect, it was safe and good enough, so it was enough for the readers to read it without confusion.

For the last, dealing with mechanics, it was still an obstacle for students in writing a narrative text. In the story above it can be seen that the writer still had difficulties in using punctuation marks, for example in a sentence "Taking a few steps backward, the fox jumped but unfortunately he missed the hanging grapes. Again the fox took a few paces backward, ran, and tried to reach them but he still failed." Those sentences should be written in "Taking a few steps backward, the fox jumped, unfortunately, he missed the hanging grapes. Again, the fox took a few paces backward, ran, and tried to reach them but he still failed."

In terms of the content, it can be concluded that mostly the students could develop their ideas well and support them by giving relevant details. While dealing with organization or text structure of narrative text, the students mostly could develop orientation, complication, resolution, and coda well in their narrative writing text. They really

understood what should be elaborated in those each text structure of narrative text. The term "schematic structure of text" refers to how students organize their writing in accordance with the general framework of narrative texts and how they employ transitional words to ensure that their writing is coherent and clear (Hout-Wolters, 2020).

Meanwhile, due to language use and vocabulary (diction), from the results of the students' narrative writing text, it can be concluded that most of the students can use past tense, nouns and pronouns, adjectives, adverbs of place and time appropriately in their writing. In addition, they can also select and use the words or diction properly although they are simple and common words for their narrative writing. Using the finding difficult word technique significantly improves pupils' writing skills in narrative texts, making it easier for them to express their opinions and write effectively (Butarbutar, et. al. 2018).

The last, concerning the mechanics, the students have sufficient ability in using punctuation marks and capital letters for their narrative writing text. Students' writing assignments contain a number of mechanics mistakes, but these errors do not significantly affect readers' understanding (Yuliawati, 2021).

2. The Difficulties encountered in Writing Narrative Text in the Secondary EFL Classroom

From the interview results, it was reported that students encountered some various difficulties, as shown in the following extract.

Student 2	"In my own opinion, it's not that difficult. The hardest part for me in writing a narrative story is stress, and putting too much pressure on myself to create a story that is different from others."
Student 9	"It's not that difficult either."
Student 7	"It's not difficult but it takes time."
Student 4	"It's not that difficult for me, because the story is a fantasy where we can create a story with imagination that may not even exist in the real world, hahaha."
Student 1	"Quite difficult, because when writing a narrative text, the only constraints I have that a language use and grammar."
Student 3	"It's difficult to find ideas."
Student 5	"Yes, because I have to think of an idea first."
Student 8	"Yes, because sometimes it is difficult to imagine something with imagination, let alone make it in a story and in English, I find it difficult."
Student 6	"Quite difficult and challenging when copying to English."

From the students' responses above, it was clear that students still have difficulties in writing narrative text, such as creating a story that is different from others (Student 2), using appropriate language use or grammar (Student 1 and Student 6), finding the ideas (Student 3 and Student 5), etc. In addition, there were some students who still had

psychological difficulties as shown in the following extract.

Student 3 <i>"When in the process of writing, sometimes I lack the motivation to continue the story."</i>
Student 2 <i>"To find the motivation to make an outline takes quite a long time, so I have to be really intentional before I can write well."</i>
Student 7 <i>"I found it hard to motivate myself to write because I don't like writing and creating stories."</i>
Student 9 <i>"It's hard to motivate myself to finish writing a narrative text."</i>

The next difficulties faced by students were related to linguistic difficulties (i.e., the use of past tense, limited vocabulary, and the influence of the first language on writing in English)

Student 6 <i>"Grammar makes me confused, because it is different from the way I usually write."</i>
Student 4 <i>"I can't use past tenses well enough."</i>
Student 3 <i>"Writing in the past tense makes it difficult for me to write correctly."</i>
Student 5 <i>"Writing in the past tense is very difficult for me, because the vocab is different and that to be makes me confused."</i>

In addition, cognitive difficulties were also experienced by the students as shown in the extract below.

Student 7 <i>"Difficulty in creating a good story line cause I am lack of reading"</i>
Student 9 <i>"Difficulty in making the content clear due to lack of imagination"</i>

From the interview results, it can be concluded that in writing narrative texts, students' difficulties in vocabulary and language use can affect the process of word structures that used past tense sentences. According to Byrne (1997), linguistic challenges are problems in constructing English sentences. For instance, a writer may make errors when selecting a sentence structure, making a sentence inappropriate for its intended meaning. Writing standards-based language norms and the author's ability to apply them are related in terms of linguistic challenges. Sentence structure, grammar, vocabulary, and language use are all areas of linguistic difficulties. In this case, it can be overcome through consultation with teachers, asking their

friends, and browsing on the internet as their support in writing narrative texts.

In the real writing practices in EFL classes, engagement in writing narrative texts can be clearly seen when students develop text structures. According to Byrne (1997), cognitive challenges are problems with the writer's comprehension of some elements of written instruction. Cognitive challenges encompass problems with content, organization, and mechanics, including errors in spelling, grammar, capitalization, and paragraph structure.

Meanwhile, there were some students who felt internal difficulties such as lack of motivation in writing narrative texts. Byrne (1997) stated a psychological difficulty is one that has to do with self-contained or internal issues, including writing anxiousness, low motivation, or lack of confidence. Students write because they observe friends writing or because their teachers may be influencing them. However, ambiguity motivates them to write, and they have doubts about the things they write. Furthermore, some students choose not to exhibit their writing; they purposefully conceal their flaws and frequently give up because they are so gloomy and feel that they have failed already. Although the teacher should not allow the concept of failure to get into the minds of the students, the teacher also cannot eradicate it (Nacira, 2010:76).

For the last, the influence of the first language on writing in English. The use of language to different languages exist in writing standards. Nobody is a naturally talented writer in any manner. Writing is a skill that may be developed via practice, mastery, and learning. Even for native speakers, writing continues to be the hardest skill to acquire. One reason for this could be that writing requires writers to demonstrate control over a wide range of elements, including language, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, format, both letter shape and content—control at the sentence level. Additionally, writers need to be able to organize and incorporate ideas into texts and paragraphs in a consistent and cohesive manner (Nacira, 2010:84).

CONCLUSION

Finally, from the findings and discussion as explained above, it can be concluded that students mostly could develop their ideas well by organizing and writing those ideas into a coherent content and text structure of narrative text and utilizing appropriate diction (vocabulary), language use, and writing mechanics. However, some difficulties were still found during the process of writing, for example, lack of motivation, lack of confidence in writing, and the influence of the first language on writing in English.

Based on the findings and discussion that have been described above, the researcher finally has some suggestions, particularly to EFL teachers and future researchers. First, EFL teachers are suggested to encourage students' motivation and improve their confidence to write narrative text by showing them various attractive videos and picture series on narrative stories. In addition, assisting students to use English in their writing can also be done by the teachers in order to avoid the influence of using the first language on their writing.

Meanwhile, for the future researchers, if they want to investigate the similar topic, it is better for them to explore other types of texts with different school levels or other issues on writing. For example, investigating the profile of the tenth graders' news items text (or hortatory exposition text, review text, descriptive text, etc.) in the EFL contexts; exploring writing strategies employed in writing certain text, etc.

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