



An Analysis of The Ability of Writing Narrative Text of The Tenth Grade Students of SMA Dharma Ayu Kefamenanu

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Abstract

This study focuses on examining the writing skills of tenth-grade learners at SMA Dharma Ayu Kefamenanu in crafting narrative texts during the academic year 2023/2024. Utilizing a descriptive qualitative approach, the research involved a sample of 30 students chosen through purposive sampling methods. Data were gathered from students' written narrative texts, which were subsequently assessed based on five key components of writing: content, organization, vocabulary, language usage, and mechanics. The results indicated that the students' overall writing proficiency was categorized as "fair," with content and organization receiving relatively higher ratings, while language usage and mechanics were pinpointed as areas requiring enhancement. The majority of students managed to create a fundamental narrative structure, comprising orientation, complication, and resolution, yet faced challenges with grammar precision, suitable vocabulary, and punctuation. The results suggest that although students show comprehension of narrative elements, their technical writing abilities are somewhat inadequate. In light of these outcomes, it is recommended that English instructors offer more targeted teaching and constructive feedback on grammar and writing conventions to improve students' writing skills overall. This research sheds light on the existing proficiency in narrative writing among high school students and provides valuable insights for curriculum improvement and teaching methods aimed at boosting English writing capabilities.

Keywords: Narrative Writing, Student Ability, Descriptive Qualitative Method



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INTRODUCTION

Writing is recognized as one of the four fundamental language skills in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. Among the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, it is frequently regarded as the most

intricate due to the simultaneous demands of idea generation, content organization, grammatical application, and appropriate vocabulary usage (Harmer in Osmani, 2019). In Indonesia, high school students are required to develop writing skills as part of the English curriculum, with narrative text being a significant genre of focus. Engaging in narrative writing allows students to harness their creativity, utilize proper text structures, and convey personal experiences or imaginative stories (Jefferson, M., & Anderson, 2017).

Despite the curriculum's focus on writing, many students encounter difficulties in producing coherent and grammatically accurate texts, particularly in narrative writing. They often struggle to articulate their ideas logically, organize narrative elements effectively, and employ suitable language features, such as the past tense and sequencing markers. These challenges adversely impact the quality of their writing and diminish their confidence in expressing themselves in written English.

Narrative text is a type of text that tells a story or sequence of events in a structured way. According to Jefferson, M., & Anderson, (2017), a narrative text includes three main components: orientation, complication, and resolution. The orientation sets the scene and introduces the characters, the complication presents a problem or conflict, and the resolution shows how the problem is solved. Narrative texts can be based on real or fictional events and are often used to teach students how to organize ideas and use past tense, sequence markers, and descriptive language (Jubhari et al., 2022; Fauzi, 2024).

In analysing students' writing ability, this study uses the framework proposed by Jacobs et al. (2020), which breaks writing assessment into five components: content (ideas and relevance), organization (structure and logical flow), vocabulary (word choice and language richness), language use (grammar and sentence structure), and mechanics (spelling, punctuation, and formatting). Each component plays an important role in determining the quality of a written text. This analytical scoring method allows for a detailed evaluation of students' strengths and weaknesses in writing.

Previous studies support the use of this rubric in educational settings. For example, Hasan and Marzuki (2017) applied the Jacobs et al. rubric to assess the narrative writing of Indonesian high school students and found that students often perform better in content and organization than in grammar and mechanics. This finding supports the structure of the current study and helps justify the choice of assessment criteria.

Astuti (2020) discovered that senior high school students in Indonesia frequently make grammatical and vocabulary errors when crafting narrative texts. Likewise, Marlina and Lestari (2022) noted that while students can generate ideas, they often have difficulties with sentence structure, verb tense, and writing

mechanics, including punctuation and spelling. Nugroho and Ratnasari (2023) pointed out that inadequate vocabulary knowledge and a lack of coherence are ongoing issues. However, these studies primarily concentrate on urban or well-resourced schools, which may not accurately represent the experiences of students in rural or disadvantaged areas.

This study focuses on SMA Dharma Ayu Kefamenanu, a rural school in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. SMA Dharma Ayu Kefamenanu, a senior high school situated in a remote region of East Nusa Tenggara, presents its students with various challenges. Students in this school face different learning conditions, including limited access to English language materials, reduced exposure to English use outside the classroom, and fewer opportunities to practice writing skills. These contextual factors are likely to impact their writing ability in distinct ways compared to their urban counterparts. However, there has been little research exploring writing performance in rural Indonesian schools. This gap is significant, as rural schools often face unique educational challenges that deserve specific attention.

The central aim of this study is to analyze the ability of the tenth-grade students of SMA Dharma Ayu Kefamenanu in writing narrative texts and to identify the most common problems they face. This research is important for several reasons. First, it provides empirical data from a rural school context that is underrepresented in current literature. Second, by identifying specific areas of difficulty in students' writing, the findings can inform more targeted teaching strategies for narrative writing. Third, this study contributes to a more equitable understanding of EFL learning in Indonesia by including voices and data from rural education settings.

While previous scholars have explored the general issues in EFL writing, this research offers a localized, context-sensitive analysis that is vital for improving English teaching in diverse educational environments. Therefore, the answers provided by this study not only complement existing research but also present a valuable contribution by highlighting the writing challenges of students who are often overlooked in academic discussions.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the narrative writing skills of tenth-grade students and to identify common issues found in their texts. This research design was chosen as it allows a thorough and contextual exploration of the students' actual writing performance, offering insights beyond numerical data through direct observation and detailed description.

The research took place at SMA Dharma Ayu Kefamenanu, a high school located in North Central Timor Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. The setting was selected based on the relevance of the English learning context, particularly in rural schools where students have limited access to authentic English exposure. The study was conducted over two months, from August to September 2023. During this period, the researchers coordinated with the school, distributed writing tests, scored students' work, and conducted the data analysis.

The target population of the research consisted of all tenth-grade students at SMA Dharma Ayu Kefamenanu in the 2023/2024 academic year. Using purposive sampling, one class was selected, totaling 20 students. This particular class was recommended by the English teacher as it reflected average student performance and included learners with varying levels of writing proficiency.

To gather data, the researchers used a written test as the main instrument. Students were instructed to write a narrative based on one of two given prompts: "An Unforgettable Experience" or "A Strange Dream." These topics were chosen to encourage creativity and help students demonstrate their understanding of narrative structure, including the use of plot, characters, and sequence of events. The test was administered during regular class time and was monitored by the teacher to create a natural and supportive atmosphere.

The students' writing was evaluated using an analytical scoring rubric adapted from Jacobs et al. (1981), which included five assessment components: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Each component was rated on a scale of 1 to 5. The following criteria were applied:

Table 1. Scoring Rubric		
Component	Score Range	Criteria Description
Content	1–5	Clarity and relevance of ideas, originality, and logical development
Organization	1–5	Coherence of structure, logical flow of events, and effective paragraphing
Vocabulary	1–5	Appropriate and varied word choices reflecting an adequate range of vocabulary
Language Use	1–5	Grammar accuracy, sentence construction, and correct verb tense usage
Mechanics	1–5	Correct use of punctuation, spelling, and capitalization

After scoring, the students' total scores were converted into percentage values and grouped into categories: Excellent (86–100), Good (71–85), Fair (56–70), Poor (41–55), and Very Poor (≤ 40).

The procedure consisted of three stages. First, the test instructions were explained and students were guided on how to approach the task. Second, the students were given 60 minutes to complete their writing independently without assistance or reference tools. Third, the completed texts were collected, anonymized, and prepared for scoring and analysis.

Data analysis involved two main stages. Initially, the texts were scored based on the rubric to determine overall student performance. This was followed by an in-depth error analysis to identify frequent issues related to grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, and organization. These errors were categorized to provide a clearer understanding of students' writing challenges.

To maintain the validity and reliability of the findings, several strategies were applied. Inter-rater reliability was ensured by having a second qualified rater independently assess a selection of writing samples using the same rubric. Their scores were then compared and reconciled through discussion. Methodological triangulation was used by combining quantitative scoring with qualitative error analysis. Additionally, member-checking was conducted by consulting the classroom teacher, who reviewed the interpretations and confirmed the accuracy of the findings. These steps helped to ensure that the data was both credible and dependable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research analyzed the narrative writing ability of tenth-grade students at SMA Dharma Ayu Kefamenanu in the academic year 2023/2024. The data were collected from 25 student writing samples and assessed using five criteria: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. The scoring followed a rubric adapted from Jacobs et al. (1981) with a maximum score of 100. The following are the average scores per component:

- Content: 19.6/30 – Students were able to construct simple stories, but their ideas lacked detail and creativity.
- Organization: 12.8/20 – Many students struggled with logical sequencing of events and transition words.
- Vocabulary: 11.5/20 – The range of vocabulary was basic and repetitive.
- Language Use: 11.2/25 – Numerous grammatical errors were identified, especially in tense and agreement.
- Mechanics: 3.9/5 – Common errors were found in capitalization and punctuation.

The **overall average score** was **59.0 out of 100**, indicating that the students' ability in writing narrative texts falls into the *fair* category. These results reflect that most students possess basic narrative writing skills but face notable challenges in achieving higher levels of writing competence.

Table 2. Average Scores of Students' Narrative Writing by Component

No	Component	Max Score	Average Score	Remarks
1	Content	30	19.6	Lacked elaboration and detail
2	Organization	20	12.8	Weak transitions and coherence
3	Vocabulary	20	11.5	Limited lexical variety
4	Language Use	25	11.2	Frequent grammatical errors
5	Mechanics	5	3.9	Common punctuation/capitalization errors
Total		100	59.0	Fair writing proficiency

In addition to the numerical scores, some qualitative observations were made. For instance, Student A wrote:

"Once upon a time there is a girl live in small village. She very beautiful and like to help people."

This sample shows a general understanding of narrative genre but also demonstrates subject-verb agreement issues and tense confusion.

By comparison, Student B produced a more structured narrative:

"One day, while Rina was walking home, she found a small box near the river. Curious, she opened it and found an old map..."

This student showed better organization and vocabulary, though still committed errors in verb tenses. These findings suggest variation in individual performance but also highlight general trends in the group's struggles with grammar and content development.

The analysis of students' narrative texts revealed several key findings regarding their writing ability. Overall, students were able to demonstrate a basic understanding of narrative structure, including the presence of orientation, complication, and resolution. However, their narrative texts showed significant weaknesses in grammar, coherence, and vocabulary usage.

In terms of content, most students could formulate simple storylines, but the ideas lacked originality and detail. Unlike the study by Lestari (2021), which found high engagement and creativity among students who used guided prompts, this study observed minimal elaboration in students' narratives, suggesting a need for more instructional scaffolding.

For organization, students showed difficulty in logically sequencing events and maintaining cohesion throughout the text. This differs from the findings of Yusuf and Kurniawan (2019), where students who engaged in structured writing tasks demonstrated better coherence. The present study's lack of structured interventions may have contributed to these organizational issues.

In terms of language use, grammatical errors were widespread, particularly in verb tense, subject-verb agreement, and sentence construction. This contrasts with Wulandari (2021), who reported significant improvement in students' grammar through the use of peer feedback strategies—something not implemented in the present study's setting.

Vocabulary limitations were also evident. Students predominantly used basic, repetitive words, lacking variation or richness. Unlike Nugroho et al. (2022), who observed improved lexical range through digital storytelling platforms, students in this study had limited access to such technological tools, which may explain their restricted word choice.

Finally, in mechanics, frequent punctuation and capitalization errors were observed, consistent with Suharmoko et al. (2021) who noted persistent mechanical issues among EFL students in Indonesia. However, the errors in this study appeared more frequent, possibly due to the absence of detailed correction and feedback in regular classroom practices. These findings suggest that while students are somewhat familiar with the narrative format, significant instructional support is needed in grammar, vocabulary, and text organization to improve the overall quality of their writing.

Table 3: Summary of Students' Narrative Writing Performance Compared to Previous Studies

Aspect	Findings in This Study	Comparison with Previous Research
Content	Basic narrative structure used; ideas lacked depth and creativity.	Less creative than in Lestari (2021), where guided prompts stimulated richer content.
Organization	Events were often disconnected; poor use of transitions; weak coherence.	Weaker than Yusuf & Kurniawan (2019) who applied structured writing tasks with better

		coherence.
Vocabulary	Basic and repetitive vocabulary; limited lexical variety.	Lower than Nugroho <i>et al.</i> (2022), who used digital storytelling tools to enhance vocabulary.
Language Use	Frequent errors in grammar: verb tenses, S-V agreement, and sentence structure.	Less accurate than Wulandari (2021), where peer feedback improved grammar use.
Mechanics	Many punctuation and capitalization errors; minimal editing observed.	Similar to Suharmoko <i>et al.</i> (2021), though slightly worse due to lack of corrective feedback.

DISCUSSION

This study set out to analyze the narrative writing ability of tenth-grade students at SMA Dharma Ayu Kefamenanu, focusing on five key components: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. The findings revealed that while students demonstrated basic competence in structuring a narrative, their performance was hindered by persistent issues in grammar, coherence, and vocabulary richness.

The primary objective of the study was to examine the overall ability of students in writing narrative texts and to identify specific challenges they encountered. The results clearly indicate that while the majority of students could structure a narrative (orientation, complication, resolution), many were unable to convey their ideas effectively due to limited vocabulary, poor grammatical accuracy, and weak organizational skills. These findings are essential because they highlight the gap between students' conceptual understanding of narrative structure and their actual linguistic ability to implement it in writing.

Scientifically, these results reflect the typical development stage of EFL learners in secondary education, particularly those in rural contexts with limited exposure to English. The predominance of grammatical errors and disorganized text structures can be interpreted as a sign of instructional imbalance, where form-focused instruction may be underemphasized compared to content delivery. Furthermore, limited practice opportunities and minimal corrective feedback may have compounded students' difficulties in mastering the rules of English writing.

When comparing these findings with existing literature, several similarities and differences emerge. For instance, Hasanah and Salija (2020) and Suharmoko *et al.* (2021) similarly identified vocabulary as a major hurdle in EFL writing. However, this study found grammar and organization to be more critical issues, suggesting that while vocabulary enrichment is necessary, greater

attention must also be given to sentence structure and logical flow. Moreover, Nugroho et al. (2022) reported notable improvements in students' vocabulary and writing fluency through the use of digital storytelling tools, a strategy that had not been implemented in the context of this study. This implies that the integration of digital media into writing instruction may help address multiple weaknesses at once.

Another key point of divergence relates to the use of feedback. Wulandari (2021) found that peer and teacher feedback significantly improved grammatical accuracy and narrative coherence in students' writing. The lack of such strategies in the current research context could explain the persistently low performance in grammar and mechanics among the participants.

The findings of this study thus not only confirm earlier observations about EFL learners' struggles with written English but also offer new insights into the specific weaknesses of students in rural Indonesian schools. More importantly, they emphasize the need for pedagogical intervention that targets grammar instruction, sentence construction, and logical sequencing in narrative writing. Encouraging structured peer reviews, integrating technology, and applying genre-based approaches can provide more effective pathways to support student development in this area.

In sum, this study contributes to ongoing discussions in the field of second language writing by showing that even when learners are familiar with the form and purpose of narrative texts, their ability to express themselves clearly and correctly remains a significant challenge. Addressing this issue requires both instructional innovation and sustained writing practice tailored to the learners' real needs.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study set out to analyze the ability of tenth-grade students at SMA Dharma Ayu Kefamenanu in writing narrative texts, specifically focusing on five key components: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. The findings reveal that while students demonstrate a foundational grasp of narrative structure and mechanical conventions, they face notable challenges in elaborating ideas, applying varied vocabulary, and using correct grammar.

The study advances current understanding of EFL learners' writing performance in underrepresented rural educational settings, where writing in English is often constrained by limited resources and practice opportunities.

Unlike prior research that focused primarily on urban or tertiary-level learners, this research contributes empirical evidence that supports the call for differentiated instructional strategies suited to the context of rural high school students.

Scientifically, the findings justify the need for a more integrated and scaffolded approach to writing instruction. Such an approach should emphasize not only structural coherence but also the development of linguistic competence and lexical richness, which are critical to producing effective narrative texts. Furthermore, the results underline the importance of teaching grammar and vocabulary in context rather than isolation.

Based on the findings of the research, there are some recommendations needed to explore and elaborate, they are pedagogical applications: Teachers are advised to implement genre-based writing instruction with a focus on modelling, guided writing, and peer feedback. This can help students internalize narrative conventions while improving their language proficiency. Curriculum Development: Schools should revise writing curricula to incorporate explicit instruction in grammar and vocabulary tied to writing tasks. Incorporating reading-based writing models may also help expose students to authentic language use. Professional Training: English teachers should receive training on process writing approaches and error analysis to better identify student difficulties and provide targeted support. Future Research: Future studies may explore longitudinal interventions to measure improvement in narrative writing over time. Comparative studies between rural and urban settings, or between narrative and other genres, could offer deeper insights into genre-specific challenges in EFL writing. Technology Integration: Incorporating digital tools such as writing apps and online collaborative platforms may provide students with additional exposure and practice, especially in grammar and vocabulary usage.

In sum, this research not only diagnoses existing student writing abilities but also opens pathways for more effective teaching interventions tailored to local educational needs. It contributes to the growing literature on EFL writing pedagogy and underscores the urgency of supporting rural learners in becoming competent and confident writers in English.

Finally, future researchers are encouraged to replicate this study in other rural or underserved regions to generate a more comprehensive understanding of EFL writing across different contexts in Indonesia. Investigating the effects of specific interventions, such as the use of graphic organizers or peer review, may offer further insight into how to effectively enhance students' narrative writing ability.

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