



AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT ON THE TENTH-GRADE STUDENT AT SMA KRISTEN 3 KALABAH I IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2025/2026

Margerita Sailana¹, Thomas J. Tangla'a², Adolfina M. S. Moybeka³

margeritasailana@gmail.com

Universitas Tribuana Kalabahi

ABSTRACT

Writing is one of the essential skills in English, especially in mastering descriptive texts, yet it remains a major challenge for many foreign language learners. This study aimed to investigate the specific difficulties and contributing factors faced by tenth-grade students at SMA Kristen 3 Kalabahi in writing descriptive texts during the academic year 2025/2026. Employing a qualitative descriptive research design, the study collected primary data through writing tests and structured interviews involving ten students and one English teacher. The findings revealed that students experienced significant hurdles across five core writing components: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. Among these, grammar errors—particularly concerning subject-verb agreement, simple present tense usage, and copular verb omissions—alongside severe vocabulary limitations, were the most dominant obstacles. Furthermore, structural disorganization and mechanical errors like spelling, capitalization, and punctuation negatively impacted text quality. The analysis also categorized the underlying causes into linguistic factors, such as limited vocabulary and mother-tongue interference, and non-linguistic elements, including low self-confidence, anxiety, and a lack of writing practice. The outcomes suggest that pedagogical interventions should focus on intensive writing drills, structured grammar reinforcement, and anxiety-reducing classroom environments to enhance student writing competence.

Keywords: *writing difficulties, descriptive text, vocabulary, grammar, writing skill*



INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the English language skills used to convey ideas or feelings to others in written form. Writing is also the process of describing a language so that the message conveyed by the writer can be understood by the reader (Harmer, 1998). Writing skills enable people to gather or obtain information, see the relationships between ideas, organize ideas into explainable concepts, absorb and process information, and learn actively, especially in written form (Stapa, 1994). Writing is a means of communication and, of course, communication is a constant activity.

Writing instruction in schools is one of the language skills that students must master well (Windarto et al., 2023). Dalman explains that writing is a creative process of expressing ideas in written language with the aim of informing, persuading, and entertaining others (Khuslum 2018). Furthermore, it is explained that writing is not merely conveying thoughts or feelings, but rather the activity of expressing ideas, knowledge, and concepts in written language (Purnamasari et al., 2021). Therefore, to produce good writing, it must be done repeatedly. Thus, writing requires the skill to express ideas or thoughts clearly and be able to use effective and easy-to-understand sentences and apply good writing rules so that they can be understood by readers.

Writing skills are the most difficult skills to learn compared to other skills (Sari et al., 2021). This is because writing skills require vocabulary knowledge, knowledge, and experience in order to convey the writer's ideas to readers in a systematic manner (Santika, 2020). Therefore, writing skills are very important to be instilled in students from an early age in order to train them to think critically and logically, and to be able to express their ideas or thoughts in writing.

Based on initial investigation, at SMA Kristen 3 Kalabahi students still have difficulty writing. The difficulties students experience in writing texts can be caused by a lack of vocabulary, a lack of understanding of grammar, language, and so on. Text is part of language. As far as speech and writing are concerned, text stands alone as an act of communication (Knapp & Watkins, 2005). In addition, (Ismayanti & Kholiq, 2020) states that the definition of text is made differently according to everyday language and scientific language. So this can make it difficult for students to write texts, especially descriptive texts. In fact, even though students have learned how to describe a person, animal or object, they are still unable to write descriptions well.

There are many types of texts that need to be studied and taught at the high school level. One of them is descriptive text. Descriptive text is text that provides a description of an object such as a person, place, or thing. (Hafizah et al., 2024) states that descriptive texts aim to describe certain things, people, or places that show readers the physical appearance of something clearly. Based on the definition of descriptive texts, it can be concluded that descriptive texts are texts that describe people, places,



and objects physically based on their appearance and personality.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design. The qualitative approach is considered appropriate because the study focuses on analyzing linguistic phenomena and difficulties found in written discourse, rather than measuring variables statistically. The descriptive method is used to systematically describe, interpret, and explain the forms and factors of writing difficulties as they naturally occur in the data.

The main data source consisted of descriptive texts written in English by tenth-grade students at SMA Kristen 3 Kalabahi in the 2025/2026 academic year. Data collection techniques included a writing test administered to students and structured interviews conducted with tenth-grade students and the English teacher. The instruments utilized were a writing test guideline and interview questions. Data analysis followed the interactive model by Miles and Huberman, encompassing data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the tenth-grade students at SMA Kristen 3 Kalabahi encountered several major challenges in writing descriptive texts, which can be categorized into five writing components: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics.

Difficulties in writing components

Grammar and vocabulary emerged as the most dominant difficulties. In terms of grammar, students frequently made errors concerning subject-verb agreement, simple present tense inflections, copular verb omissions, and ungrammatical sentence structures. For instance, students wrote "She have skin white..." instead of "She has white skin..." or omitted the auxiliary verb entirely. Vocabulary limitations restricted students to repetitive expressions, forcing heavy reliance on direct translation from Indonesian, which led to unnatural word orders. Furthermore, organizational failures were prominent as many students struggled to distinctively separate the identification and description stages of descriptive texts. Content generation was similarly underdeveloped, yielding brief, surface-level descriptions devoid of rich supporting



details. Finally, mechanical issues such as spelling mistakes (e.g., "frend" instead of "friend", "heppi" instead of "happy"), incorrect capitalization, and missing punctuation marks further reduced text clarity.

Contributing linguistic and non-linguistic factors

The interview analyses indicated that these writing hurdles stem from specific linguistic and non-linguistic factors. Linguistic factors included limited vocabulary mastery, deficient grammatical comprehension, and interference from the students' native language. Non-linguistic factors involved low self-confidence, anxiety, fear of making academic mistakes, and minimal independent writing practice outside of mandatory classroom assignments.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that tenth-grade students at SMA Kristen 3 Kalabahi experienced multifaceted difficulties in writing descriptive texts, spanning content elaboration, structural organization, vocabulary richness, grammatical accuracy, and mechanical precision. These challenges are driven by a combination of linguistic limitations—such as weak grammar foundations and first-language interference—and psychological barriers like low self-confidence and insufficient writing practice. To address these issues, English teachers should increase intensive writing drills, provide targeted corrective feedback, and foster a supportive classroom environment that minimizes writing anxiety.

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