

ARTICLE

**A DESCRIPTIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY OF NINTH-
GRADE STUDENTS' ABILITY IN WRITING RECOUNT
TEXTS AT SMP NEGERI 3 METRO**

By:

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**ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
TARBIYAH AND TEACHER TRAINING FACULTY**

**STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF JURAI SIWO LAMPUNG
1448 H / 2026 M**

**A DESCRIPTIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY OF NINTH-
GRADE STUDENTS' ABILITY IN WRITING RECOUNT
TEXTS AT SMP NEGERI 3 METRO**

Presented as a Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement For the Degree
of Sarjana Pendidikan (S.Pd) In English Education Departement

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1448 H / 2026 M



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APPROVAL PAGE

Title Article : A DESCRIPTIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY OF NINTH-
GRADE STUDENTS' ABILITY IN WRITING RECOUNT
TEXTS AT SMP NEGERI 3 METRO

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NOTIFICATION LETTER

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Matter : **In order to hold the Munaqosyah
of Amalia Husna Nailuzzakiyah**

To :
The Honorable of the Head of Faculty of
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Assalamu'alaikum, Wr. Wb

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It has been agreed so it can be continued to the Tarbiyah Faculty in order to be discussed on the Munaqosyah. Thank you very much.

Wassalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb

The Head of English Education Department


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NOTA DINAS

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Kepada Yth.,
Dekan Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan
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Assalamu'alaikumWr.Wb.

Setelah kami adakan pemeriksaan dan pertimbangan seperlunya maka Artikel yang disusun oleh:

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STUDENTS' ABILITY IN WRITING RECOUNT TEXTS AT SMP
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Sudah kami setuju dan dapat diajukan ke Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan Universitas Islam Negeri Jurai Siwo Lampung untuk dimunaqosyahkan.

Demikian harapan kami dan atas perhatiannya saya ucapkan terima kasih.

Wassalamu'alaikumWr.Wb.

Mengetahui,
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RATIFICATION PAGE

No. B-2883 /Un.36.1 /D/PP.00.9/07/2026

Article entitled: A DESCRIPTIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY OF NINTH-GRADE STUDENTS' ABILITY IN WRITING RECOUNT TEXTS AT SMP NEGERI 3 METRO, written by: Amalia Husna Nailuzzakiyah, student number: 2201052004, English Education Department, had been examined (Munaqosyah) in Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Faculty on Thursday, June 25th, 2026 at 10.00-12.00 WIB.

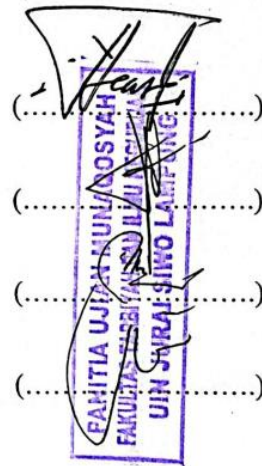
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ABSTRACT

Writing recount texts remains a challenging task for many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, particularly at the junior high school level. Although numerous studies have investigated students' writing performance, limited research has qualitatively examined students' recount writing ability across multiple writing aspects within a natural classroom context. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the ability of ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Metro in writing recount texts. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed to analyze students' writing based on five aspects: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics using Heaton's framework. Data were collected through writing tasks, classroom observation, interviews, and documentation. The analysis focused on identifying patterns, strengths, and weaknesses in students' writing. The findings reveal that students generally demonstrate adequate ability in organizing recount texts and conveying ideas. However, grammatical accuracy and vocabulary usage remain the main challenges affecting writing quality. This study concludes that ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Metro generally demonstrate a good level of ability in writing recount texts, with relatively strong performance in content and organization, but persistent weaknesses in vocabulary and grammar. These findings highlight the importance of integrating vocabulary development and grammar support in EFL writing instruction, and provide pedagogical insights for improving writing teaching practices at the junior high school level.

Keywords: Writing ability, recount text, junior high school student.

ABSTRAK

Menulis teks recount tetap menjadi tugas yang menantang bagi banyak pelajar Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL), khususnya di tingkat sekolah menengah pertama. Meskipun banyak penelitian telah menyelidiki kemampuan menulis siswa, penelitian terbatas telah menguji secara kualitatif kemampuan menulis ulang siswa di berbagai aspek menulis dalam konteks kelas yang alami. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi kemampuan siswa kelas sembilan di SMP Negeri 3 Metro dalam menulis teks recount. Pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif digunakan untuk menganalisis tulisan siswa berdasarkan lima aspek: isi, organisasi, tata bahasa, kosa kata, dan mekanik dengan menggunakan kerangka Heaton. Data dikumpulkan melalui tugas menulis, observasi kelas, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Analisis difokuskan pada identifikasi pola, kelebihan, dan kelemahan tulisan siswa. Temuannya mengungkapkan bahwa siswa secara umum menunjukkan kemampuan yang memadai dalam mengorganisasikan teks recount dan menyampaikan ide. Namun, keakuratan tata bahasa dan penggunaan kosa kata tetap menjadi tantangan utama yang mempengaruhi kualitas tulisan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa siswa kelas sembilan di SMP Negeri 3 Metro secara umum menunjukkan tingkat kemampuan yang baik dalam menulis teks recount, dengan kinerja yang relatif kuat dalam konten dan pengorganisasian, namun kelemahan yang terus-menerus dalam kosa kata dan tata bahasa. Temuan ini menyoroti pentingnya mengintegrasikan pengembangan kosakata dan dukungan tata bahasa dalam pengajaran menulis EFL, dan memberikan wawasan pedagogi untuk meningkatkan praktik pengajaran menulis di tingkat sekolah menengah pertama.

Kata kunci: Kemampuan menulis, teks recount, siswa SMP.

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Menyatakan bahwa artikel jurnal ini secara keseluruhan adalah hasil penelitian saya kecuali bagian-bagian tertentu yang dirujuk dari sumbernya dan disebutkan dalam daftar pustaka.

Metro, 22 Juni 2026

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Metro, June 22, 2026



Amalia Husna Nailuzzakiyah
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DEDICATION PAGE

This journal article is lovingly dedicated to Allah SWT, for His endless mercy, blessings, guidance, and strength that have accompanied me throughout every step of my academic journey.

To my beloved parents, Mr. Muhammad Sugeng and Mrs. Sri Mulyaningsih, thank you for your unconditional love, endless prayers, sacrifices, patience, unwavering support, and encouragement. Without your sincere love and belief in me, I would not have been able to accomplish this academic milestone.

To Treasure, Choi Hyunsuk, Park Jihoon, Kanemoto Yoshinori, Kim Junkyu, Yoon Jaehyuk, Hamada Asahi, Kim Doyoung, Watanabe Haruto, Park Jeongwo, and So Junghwan., especially Haruto, Asahi, and Yoshinori, thank you sincerely for accompanying me throughout this research journey through your music. Your songs, performances, and inspiring messages have brought me comfort, motivation, strength, and happiness during both the joyful and challenging moments of completing this study.

To all of my friends, thank you for your encouragement, kindness, and support throughout this academic journey.

To Ronal Saputra, to accompany me for more than 1 year. Thank you for your unwavering support, for accompanying me in person through every step of this research, for always encouraging me, and for believing in me even when I doubted myself. Your presence has been one of the greatest sources of strength during this journey.

To myself, thank you for sticking around all this time, for never giving up, trusting the process, overcoming every challenge, and having the courage to keep moving forward until this journey was successfully completed, Thank you for these 4 years, I am proud of myself Amalia Husna Nailuzzakiyah.

To my beloved almamater, UIN Jurai Siwo Lampung, a place that has shaped my growth, broadened my perspectives and prepared me for the path ahead.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Alhamdulillahirabbil'ālamīn. All praise is due to Allah SWT, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful, for His endless mercy, blessings, guidance, and strength, which have enabled the researcher to complete this journal article entitled "*A Descriptive Qualitative Study of Ninth-Grade Students' Ability in Writing Recount Texts at SMP Negeri 3 Metro.*" Peace and blessings be upon Prophet Muhammad SAW, his family, his companions, and all his followers until the end of time.

The researcher realizes that this journal article could not have been completed without the support, guidance, encouragement, assistance, and prayers of many people. Therefore, the researcher would like to express her deepest gratitude and sincere appreciation to:

1. Prof. Dr. Ida Umami, M.Pd., Kons., as the Rector of Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Jurai Siwo Lampung.
2. Dr. Siti Annisah, M.Pd., as the Dean of the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Jurai Siwo Lampung.
3. Dr. Much Deiniatur, M.Pd.B.I., as the Head of the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Jurai Siwo Lampung.
4. Yeasy Agustina Sari, M.Pd., as the research supervisor, for her valuable guidance, patience, encouragement, constructive suggestions, and continuous support throughout the completion of this journal article.
5. All lecturers and administrative staff of the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Jurai Siwo Lampung, for their knowledge, guidance, and assistance throughout the researcher's academic journey.
6. The Headmaster, English teacher, and ninth-grade students of SMP Negeri 3 Metro for their permission, cooperation, participation, and valuable contributions during the research process.
7. The researcher's beloved parents and family for their endless love, sincere prayers, unwavering support, motivation, sacrifices, and encouragement throughout the completion of this research.
8. The researcher would like to express her deepest gratitude to all members of Treasure: Choi Hyunsuk, Park Jihoon, Kanemoto Yoshinori, Kim Junkyu, Yoon Jaehyuk, Hamada Asahi, Kim Doyoung, Watanabe Haruto, Park Jeongwoo, and So Junghwan, as well as former members Takata Mashiho and Yedam, who have been a source of happiness, comfort, inspiration, and motivation since June 6, 2021. Through their music and inspiring messages, they have encouraged the researcher to remain strong and complete this academic journey. The researcher also sincerely thanks her friends and everyone who has provided support and encouragement.
9. The researcher would like to express special appreciation to Watanabe Haruto, Hamada Asahi, and Kanemoto Yoshinori as her first, second, and third favorite members (biases). Their music, performances, and positive influence have become sources of strength and inspiration throughout this journey. Haruto's words, "If you believe in yourself and never give up, your dreams will surely come true," have motivated the researcher to remain confident, work hard, and pursue her dreams. The researcher sincerely expresses her gratitude to Haruto.

Finally, the researcher realizes that this journal article is still far from perfect. Therefore, constructive criticism and valuable suggestions are highly appreciated for the improvement of this work. The researcher hopes that this journal article will be beneficial for readers, future researchers, and the development of English language education.

Metro, June 22, 2026

The Researcher,

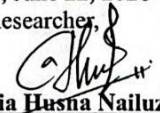

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A Descriptive Qualitative Study of Ninth-Grade Students' Ability in Writing Recount Texts at SMP Negeri 3 Metro

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Abstract

Writing recount texts remains a challenging task for many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, particularly at the junior high school level. Although numerous studies have investigated students' writing performance, limited research has qualitatively examined students' recount writing ability across multiple writing aspects within a natural classroom context. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the ability of ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Metro in writing recount texts. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed to analyze students' writing based on five aspects: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics using Heaton's framework. Data were collected through writing tasks, classroom observation, interviews, and documentation. The analysis focused on identifying patterns, strengths, and weaknesses in students' writing. The findings reveal that students generally demonstrate adequate ability in organizing recount texts and conveying ideas. However, grammatical accuracy and vocabulary usage remain the main challenges affecting writing quality. This study concludes that ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Metro generally demonstrate a good level of ability in writing recount texts, with relatively strong performance in content and organization, but persistent weaknesses in vocabulary and grammar. These findings highlight the importance of integrating vocabulary development and grammar support in EFL writing instruction, and provide pedagogical insights for improving writing teaching practices at the junior high school level.

Article History

Received: dd-mm-yyyy

Revised : dd-mm-yyyy

Accepted: 19-June-2024

Keywords:

Writing ability,
recount text, junior
high school student.



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INTRODUCTION

Writing is widely recognized as one of the most complex and cognitively demanding skills in second and foreign language learning. Unlike receptive skills such as listening and reading, writing requires learners to simultaneously manage multiple linguistic and cognitive processes, including idea generation, organization, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary selection, and mechanical conventions. For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, these challenges are even more pronounced because students must express ideas using linguistic structures that are not part of their first language system (Brown, 2020).

Consequently, developing writing competence has become an essential objective of English language education, particularly at the junior high school level where students begin to engage with structured written genres.

In the Indonesian educational context, English instruction under the Independent Curriculum adopts a genre-based approach that emphasizes students' ability to comprehend and produce various text types appropriate to their level of learning. Among these genres, recount texts play a significant role in junior high school English instruction. Recount texts are used to retell past experiences or events in chronological order and are intended to inform or entertain readers (Melalolin et al., 2020). Through recount writing, students learn to structure narratives logically, apply grammatical rules such as past tense forms, and convey experiences coherently. Therefore, mastery of recount text writing is considered an important indicator of students' overall writing proficiency.

Despite its importance, writing instruction in many EFL classrooms continues to face persistent challenges. Writing skills do not develop naturally but require structured instruction, continuous practice, and meaningful feedback (Maharani et al., 2025). However, classroom practices often provide limited opportunities for students to develop their writing ability systematically. Rayhan et al. (2025) reported that insufficient writing practice significantly affects students' ability to develop vocabulary and apply appropriate writing techniques. Similarly, Hady et al. (2025) found that students frequently struggle to elaborate ideas and provide supporting details when composing written texts. These findings suggest that students' writing difficulties are not only related to linguistic competence but also to limited exposure to effective writing instruction.

Effective writing involved mastery of several interrelated components. Brown (2020) identified grammar, content development, vocabulary, and mechanics as fundamental elements of writing proficiency. Grammar ensures structural accuracy and clarity in expressing ideas, while content refers to the relevance and completeness of information conveyed in the text. Vocabulary competence influences word choice and lexical variation, which are essential for conveying meaning effectively. Meanwhile, mechanics—including punctuation, capitalization, and spelling—support the readability and clarity of written texts. Weakness in any of these aspects can significantly reduce the overall quality of students' writing.

Empirical studies had documented that many junior high school students encountered difficulties in writing recount texts. Lestari & Novari (2013) found that although students demonstrated relatively good performance in recount writing, grammatical errors remained the most frequent problem. Similarly, Maheva et al. (2023) reported that students often struggle with the correct use of auxiliary verbs and past tense forms when composing recount texts. Furthermore, Sartika et al. (2022) revealed that a substantial proportion of students demonstrated poor ability in organizing recount texts coherently.

These findings indicate that students' writing problems often involve multiple linguistic aspects rather than a single dimension of writing competence.

On the other hand, several studies had shown that appropriate instructional strategies could significantly enhance students' writing performance. Suari et al. (2025) demonstrated that the implementation of project-based learning integrated with culturally responsive teaching improved students' recount writing scores significantly. Similarly, Maharani et al. (2025) found that topical approaches effectively increased students' writing performance by providing structured guidance during the writing process. These studies highlighted that improving writing ability required both strong linguistic foundations and effective pedagogical approaches.

Research had also indicated that vocabulary and grammar mastery played critical roles in determining writing performance. Rahayu et al. (2024) found that lexical knowledge was a strong predictor of writing quality, slightly exceeding the predictive influence of grammatical knowledge. This finding is supported by Zamani & Ahangari (2025), who reported that both grammatical competence and vocabulary knowledge significantly correlated with students' writing performance. In addition, Astosari (2025) demonstrated that mastery of simple past tense contributed substantially to recount text writing ability, emphasizing the importance of grammatical accuracy in recount narratives.

Although previous studies had identified students' difficulties in writing recount texts and examined the effectiveness of various instructional approaches, most studies have focused on quantitative outcomes, error analysis, or the effectiveness of particular teaching methods. Limited studies have qualitatively explored students' writing ability by simultaneously examining multiple writing aspects within authentic classroom contexts. Consequently, a more comprehensive qualitative investigation is needed to understand students' strengths and challenges in recount text writing.

The novelty of this study lies in its descriptive qualitative approach that analyzes students' recount text writing ability through an integrated use of four data sources: writing products, classroom observations, interviews, and documentation. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on scores or isolated linguistic features, this study provides an in-depth description of students' writing performance across five aspects simultaneously: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. This approach offers a richer understanding of students' writing competence and contributes practical insights for EFL writing instruction.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design aimed at exploring and interpreting students' ability in writing recount texts. Qualitative research focused on understanding phenomena from participants' perspectives and describing them in a natural context (Creswell, 2014). This approach was

considered appropriate because the study sought to analyze students' writing in depth rather than to measure it statistically.

The population of this study consisted of all ninth-grade students of SMP Negeri 3 Metro in the 2025/2026 academic year, totaling 251 students distributed across seven classes. The participants were selected purposively (Sugiyono, 2021) from clas IX B which consisted of 30 students, based on their involvement in writing activities. This class was chosen because it represented typical student characteristics in learning English writing at the junior high school level. The characteristics of the students in this class were selected because they participate in English class activities, remain engaged in class assignments, understand writing instructions well, exhibit behavior commonly found among ninth-grade students, and have previously studied story-based texts and completed writing assignments. Consequently, this class is considered a good sample of typical junior high school students and helps researchers gather important information regarding their ability to write narrative texts.

Data were collected through four techniques: writing tasks, classroom observations, interviews, and documentation. Students were instructed to complete an individual writing task in which they wrote a recount text based on their personal experiences. Before the task began, the teacher explained the purpose of the activity, reviewed the characteristics and generic structure of recount texts, and provided examples to ensure students understood the assignment. Students were then given a specific topic related to personal experiences and allocated approximately 60 minutes to complete their writing. They were asked to write independently without assistance from peers and to organize their texts according to the orientation, events, and reorientation structure of recount texts. The completed writing products were collected and used as the primary data source for analysis.

Classroom observations were conducted during three English lessons to examine students' engagement in writing activities and the teacher's instructional practices. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both the English teacher and the students to gain a comprehensive understanding of students' writing abilities. The teacher interview consisted of ten questions focusing on students' writing abilities, common difficulties, and classroom writing instruction. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten selected students representing different performance levels (excellent, good, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory) based on their writing task results. The student interview included at least five questions, such as: (1) "*How do you feel when you are asked to write a recount text in English?*" (2) "*What difficulties do you often face when writing a recount text?*" (3) "*Do you usually plan your writing before*

starting? Why or why not?" (4) *"What strategies do you use to find the right vocabulary when you forget a word?"* (5) *"What kind of help or feedback from the teacher do you find most useful for improving your writing?"* The student interviews aimed to explore their perceptions, challenges, and strategies in writing recount texts.

Students' writing products were analyzed using Heaton's analytical writing framework, which consists of five aspects: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. The analysis involved repeated reading of the texts, identification of recurring patterns, categorization of strengths and weaknesses, and interpretation of findings. Data were then analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (2014), including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

To ensure trustworthiness, data triangulation was conducted by comparing findings from students' writing products, observations, interviews, and documentation. Peer debriefing and expert judgment were also employed to enhance the credibility of the analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of students' writing revealed that most ninth-grade students demonstrated an adequate ability in composing recount texts. In general, students were able to convey their experiences and organize their ideas into a recognizable recount structure. A number of students showed strong performance, particularly in presenting clear and well-developed narratives, while others demonstrated moderate ability with some limitations in elaborating ideas and maintaining linguistic accuracy. However, a small group of students still experienced difficulties in expressing their ideas clearly and consistently. Interestingly, no students were found to produce writing that was entirely incomprehensible. Overall, these findings indicated that students possessed a basic level of competence in writing recount texts, although variations in performance remained evident across different aspects of writing, such as grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics.

This finding was supported by the English teacher's statement during the interview:

"Most students can already write simple recount texts, but they still struggle to make their sentences grammatically correct and more detailed."

Further analysis was conducted to examine students' performance in each writing aspect, namely grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, and organization. Grammar was found to be a crucial component of students' writing ability because grammatical accuracy ensures clarity and coherence in written communication (Brown, 2020). The analysis showed that students demonstrated varying levels of grammatical mastery. Students in the excellent category were able to consistently apply correct simple past tense forms,

appropriate subject-verb agreement, accurate pronoun usage, and proper sentence structures. For example,

One student wrote: "*Last holiday, my family and I went to Parangtritis Beach. We left home at 6 a.m. and arrived at the beach at 9 a.m.*"

This sentence illustrated accurate use of past tense verbs and well-formed sentence structures. In contrast, students in the good and satisfactory categories showed several grammatical errors, particularly in the use of past tense forms and subject-verb agreement. For instance, a student wrote: "*Last week, I go to my grandmother house in the village.*" In this case, the verb form *go* should have been replaced with *went* to indicate past events. Meanwhile, students categorized as unsatisfactory produced frequent grammatical errors, such as incorrect verb forms, missing auxiliary verbs, and incomplete sentence structures, which occasionally hindered the clarity of the text.

Vocabulary was identified as the most problematic aspect in students' recount text writing. Many students relied on basic and repetitive vocabulary, which limited the richness and clarity of their narratives. Students in the excellent category demonstrated varied and descriptive word choices, such as *brehtaking scenery*, *magnificent sandcastle*, and *unique seashells*, which enhanced the vividness of their writing. In contrast, students in the good and satisfactory categories tended to use simple vocabulary with limited variation, such as *went*, *played*, *happy*, and *beautiful*. Although these words conveyed meaning, the limited lexical range reduced the overall quality of the narrative. Students in the unsatisfactory category demonstrated very restricted vocabulary use, often relying on general words and short sentence structures.

This result was also reinforced by the teacher's interview statement:

"*Students often use very basic vocabulary. They rarely explore new words, so their writing sounds repetitive and less expressive.*"

The mechanics aspect, which includes punctuation, capitalization, and spelling, also showed varying levels of mastery among students. Students in the excellent category applied punctuation and capitalization accurately, with no noticeable spelling errors. For example, they correctly capitalized proper nouns such as *Parangtritis Beach* and used punctuation marks to separate clauses and sentences appropriately. Students in the good category demonstrated minor mechanical errors, such as missing apostrophes in possessive forms or omitted punctuation between sentences. Meanwhile, students in the satisfactory and unsatisfactory categories frequently produced mechanical errors, including inconsistent capitalization, missing punctuation, and run-on sentences. These errors sometimes disrupted the readability of the text, although the overall meaning could still be understood.

Organization was another important aspect examined in students' writing. Recount texts generally follow a generic structure consisting of orientation, events, and reorientation (Melalolin et al., 2020). Students in the excellent category were able to organize their ideas clearly using this structure. Their texts began with an orientation introducing the participants, time, and

place, followed by a sequence of events presented in chronological order, and concluded with a reorientation expressing personal impressions or conclusions. Students in the good category also demonstrated recognizable recount structures, although the development of ideas was sometimes limited. Meanwhile, students in the satisfactory and unsatisfactory categories often produced texts with incomplete structures, minimal event descriptions, or unclear sequencing of events.

Content was found to be one of the strongest aspects of students' writing. Most students were able to present relevant ideas and describe personal experiences related to the assigned topic. Students in the excellent category developed their narratives with sufficient details, explanations, and supporting information. Meanwhile, students in the satisfactory and unsatisfactory categories tended to provide limited descriptions and insufficient elaboration of events. Although some students produced brief narratives, the majority were able to communicate the main ideas of their experiences clearly. These findings suggest that students generally possessed adequate ability in generating and expressing ideas for recount writing.

To summarize the results across all writing aspects, Table 2 presents the overall distribution of students' performance.

Table 2. Summary of Student Performance Across Writing Aspects

Aspect	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Fail
Grammar	Consistent past tense and accurate structure	Few errors	Some errors affecting clarity	Frequent errors	None
Vocabulary	Varied and precise	Adequate but basic	Limited range	Very limited	None
Mechanics	Accurate punctuation and capitalization	Minor errors	Noticeable errors	Frequent errors	None
Organization	Clear recount structure	Structure present	Basic structure	Unclear structure	None
Content	sufficient details, explanation, and supporting information	Adequate ability	limited descriptions	insufficient elaboration of events	None

The analysis indicated that students generally demonstrated adequate ability in writing recount texts, particularly in terms of content organization and narrative sequencing. However, vocabulary emerged as the weakest aspect, followed by grammar and mechanics. These findings were consistent with

previous studies that identified vocabulary limitations as one of the major challenges faced by EFL learners in writing tasks (Rayhan et al., 2025; Zamani & Ahangari, 2025).

Table 3. Summary of Student Performance Across Writing Aspects

	3%	12%	40%	33%	12%
Grammar	1 (3.3%)	4 (13.3%)	12 (40%)	10 (33.3%)	3 (10%)
Vocabulary	1 (3.3%)	4 (13.3%)	13 (43.3%)	9 (30%)	3 (10%)
Mechanics	1 (3.3%)	3 (10%)	11 (36.7%)	11 (36.7%)	4 (13.3%)
Organization	2 (6.7%)	7 (23.3%)	11 (36.7%)	8 (26.7%)	2 (6.7%)
Content	2 (6.7%)	6 (20%)	12 (40%)	8 (26.7%)	2 (6.7%)

Based on the analysis presented in Table 3, 1 student (3.3%) fell into the Excellent category in grammar because they consistently used the simple past tense, accurate subject-verb agreement, and complete logical sentence structures without significant errors (Brown, 2020; Astosari, 2025). 4 students (13.3%) in the Good category made only a few minor mistakes, such as occasional inconsistency in past tense verb forms, but their sentences remained generally understandable. 12 students (40%) in the Satisfactory category showed fairly frequent grammatical errors, particularly in auxiliary verbs and past tense forms, which sometimes interfered with clarity. 10 students (33.3%) in the Unsatisfactory category made very frequent and systematic errors, such as using base verbs for all past events or writing incomplete sentences, making their narratives difficult to comprehend (Maheva et al., 2023). Finally, 3 students (10%) fell into the Fail category due to pervasive grammatical breakdowns that severely obstructed overall meaning.

In vocabulary, 1 student (3.3%) in the Excellent category used varied and descriptive words such as breathtaking scenery, making their narratives vivid and expressive (Zamani & Ahangari, 2025). 4 students (13.3%) in the Good category used adequate but basic and repetitive vocabulary (went, happy). 13 students (43.3%) in the Satisfactory category had a limited range of vocabulary, often repeating the same words. 9 students (30%) in the Unsatisfactory category had very restricted vocabulary, using only common words and very short sentences, which hindered clear expression of ideas (Rahayu et al., 2024). 3 students (10%) in the Fail category showed such poor lexical choices that their intended messages were almost entirely lost.

In mechanics, 1 student (3.3%) in the Excellent category applied capitalization and punctuation accurately with no spelling errors (Brown, 2020). 3 students (10%) in the Good category made only minor mechanical errors, such as missing apostrophes in possessive forms. 11 students (36.7%) in the Satisfactory category showed noticeable errors, such as inconsistent

capitalization or omitted punctuation, which slightly affected readability but meaning remained understandable. 11 students (36.7%) in the Unsatisfactory category frequently made severe mechanical errors (no capitalization, no periods, misspelled words), making their texts hard to read (Kristianto et al., 2025). 4 students (13.3%) in the Fail category produced texts with completely unintelligible spelling and punctuation that hindered basic reading comprehension.

Regarding organization, 2 students (6.7%) in the Excellent category structured their texts with complete and coherent orientation-events-reorientation framework (Melalolin et al., 2020). 7 students (23.3%) in the Good category demonstrated recognizable recount structures, though idea development was sometimes limited. 11 students (36.7%) in the Satisfactory category produced incomplete structures (e.g., missing reorientation) or non-chronological event sequences. 8 students (26.7%) in the Unsatisfactory category had unclear or chaotic structures, making it difficult to distinguish text sections. 2 students (6.7%) in the Fail category had no discernible recount structure at all, rendering their narratives disjointed and confusing.

Finally, in content, 2 students (6.7%) in the Excellent category developed their narratives with sufficient details and supporting information (Heaton, 2023). 6 students (20%) in the Good category presented adequate ideas but with shallow descriptions. 12 students (40%) in the Satisfactory category provided very limited descriptions (only 2--3 short sentences). 8 students (26.7%) in the Unsatisfactory category failed to elaborate events, providing minimal or irrelevant information (Sartika et al., 2022). 2 students (6.7%) in the Fail category wrote content that was either too brief or entirely off-topic, failing to fulfill the basic requirements of a recount text.

The findings suggested that students' ability to write recount texts was generally adequate; however, their performance reflected an imbalance between structural understanding and linguistic accuracy. This result also suggested that most students had developed a basic ability to narrate past experiences in written form and to follow the conventional structure of recount texts. The finding was consistent with previous studies conducted in Indonesian EFL contexts. For instance, Lestari & Novari (2013) reported that students' recount writing performance at the senior high school level was also categorized as good, while Maharani et al. (2025) found that students' writing ability significantly improved following instructional interventions. The convergence of these findings suggested that Indonesian secondary school students generally possessed a foundational level of narrative writing ability when assessed using analytical writing criteria. However, the present study also revealed that this competence was unevenly distributed across different aspects

of writing, indicating that students' ability to produce structurally acceptable texts did not necessarily correspond with equally strong linguistic accuracy.

From a grammatical perspective, the results highlighted the central role of grammatical competence in shaping the overall quality of students' recount texts. Students who achieved higher scores demonstrated consistent control of the simple past tense, appropriate subject-verb agreement, and relatively accurate use of pronouns, articles, and prepositions. These features are essential for recount texts because the genre relies heavily on chronological narration of past events. The significance of tense mastery in recount writing has been emphasized by Astosari (2025), who reported that mastery of the simple past tense contributed substantially to students' writing performance. Nevertheless, the analysis also indicated that many students still experienced difficulty maintaining grammatical consistency throughout their narratives, particularly in the accurate use of verb forms and auxiliary verbs. Similar challenges had been reported by Maheva et al. (2023), who found that EFL learners frequently encountered problems in applying grammatical rules consistently when constructing written narratives. At lower performance levels, grammatical inaccuracies occurred more frequently and tended to obscure meaning, which aligned with Sartika et al. (2022), who reported that many students struggled with basic grammatical structures in English writing. These findings reinforced the view that grammatical competence remains a critical foundation for effective written communication in EFL contexts.

Vocabulary knowledge emerged as another crucial factor influencing the quality of students' writing. Students with higher writing scores demonstrated greater lexical diversity, allowing them to describe events more vividly and elaborate their narratives in greater detail. The use of varied adjectives, precise verbs, and specific nouns contributed to richer and more coherent recount texts. In contrast, students with lower performance levels tended to rely on limited and repetitive vocabulary, resulting in narratives that lacked descriptive depth and communicative effectiveness. This finding supported Rayhan et al. (2025), who argued that limited lexical resources often constrain students' ability to express ideas clearly in written form. Furthermore, Zamani & Ahangari (2025) demonstrated that lexical knowledge may serve as a stronger predictor of writing quality than grammatical knowledge alone, as vocabulary determines the extent to which ideas can be articulated and elaborated in a text. Similarly, Rahayu et al. (2024) found that vocabulary breadth significantly influenced writing performance in EFL settings. These findings highlighted the importance of integrating systematic vocabulary development into writing instruction to support students' ability to produce more expressive and detailed narratives.

The analysis of mechanical aspects revealed that although some students demonstrated adequate control of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling, mechanical errors remained relatively common across different performance levels. Minor errors, particularly in punctuation usage and word spelling, frequently occurred even in otherwise well-structured texts. Brown (2020) notes

that mechanical errors are common among EFL learners because written English conventions often differ substantially from spoken language patterns. When such errors occur frequently, they can reduce the clarity and readability of students' texts. Previous research by Kristianto et al. (2025) suggested that explicit instruction and systematic feedback on writing conventions can significantly improve students' mechanical accuracy. Therefore, strengthening students' awareness of mechanical aspects remains an important component of writing instruction.

Interestingly, students' performance in the organizational aspect appeared relatively stronger compared to linguistic aspects such as grammar and vocabulary. Many students were able to organize their recount texts according to the expected schematic structure consisting of orientation, events, and reorientation. This finding reflected the influence of the genre-based approach embedded in the Indonesian 2013 Curriculum, which emphasizes students' understanding of the structural characteristics of different text types. Melalolin et al. (2020) explained that genre-based instruction helps learners internalize text structures and develop awareness of how ideas are organized within specific genres. Nevertheless, while students generally demonstrated awareness of the basic structure of recount texts, some still encountered difficulties in maintaining coherence and elaborating narrative details. Suari et al. (2025) similarly reported that students often require explicit guidance in organizing ideas and developing coherent event sequences within narrative writing. These findings suggested that although students had internalized the macro-structure of recount texts, their ability to elaborate ideas effectively within that structure remained limited.

Taken together, the overall pattern of results revealed a notable imbalance between students' macro-level and micro-level writing competencies. Students appeared relatively capable of organizing ideas and following genre conventions, yet they continued to experience difficulties in linguistic accuracy and lexical variety. This pattern reflected a broader issue frequently observed in genre-based EFL writing instruction, where learners may develop awareness of text structure without simultaneously developing the linguistic resources necessary to support effective text production. Ilham (2022) emphasized that writing instruction should be designed based on learners' specific needs in order to address persistent linguistic challenges. In this regard, instructional approaches that integrate language development with genre-based writing practice may provide a more balanced learning environment. For example, Suari et al. (2025) demonstrated that project-based learning combined with culturally responsive teaching can significantly enhance students' writing performance by encouraging meaningful language use in authentic contexts. Therefore, future pedagogical practices should consider combining genre awareness with systematic development of grammar and vocabulary to foster more comprehensive writing competence among EFL learners.

The findings contributed to the growing body of research on EFL writing by highlighting the complex interplay between structural knowledge and linguistic competence in students' recount text writing. While the genre-based instructional approach appeared effective in helping students understand the organizational features of recount texts, additional pedagogical emphasis on grammatical accuracy and vocabulary development was necessary to support higher levels of writing proficiency. Strengthening these linguistic foundations may enable students not only to produce structurally appropriate texts but also to communicate their ideas more clearly, accurately, and effectively in written English.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Metro demonstrate a moderate to adequate level of ability in writing recount texts. The analysis reveals an uneven distribution of competence across the five writing aspects. Students perform relatively well in content and organization, indicating that they generally understand the purpose, generic structure (orientation-events-reorientation), and chronological sequencing of recount texts.

However, significant and persistent challenges are found in the linguistic aspects. Vocabulary emerges as the weakest area, with most students relying on basic and repetitive word choices that limit the richness of their narratives. Grammar also remains a major obstacle, particularly in the inconsistent use of the simple past tense and subject-verb agreement, which often reduces the clarity of their writing. Additionally, errors in mechanics (punctuation, capitalization, and spelling) are still frequently observed, although they do not entirely obscure meaning.

The findings indicate that while the genre-based approach in the Indonesian curriculum has successfully helped students grasp textual structures, it has not sufficiently addressed the micro-linguistic skills required for effective written production. Therefore, pedagogical practices should not only focus on text organization but also integrate systematic vocabulary development and explicit grammar instruction to support students in producing more accurate, detailed, and expressive recount texts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to express their gratitude to SMP Negeri 3 Metro and Universitas Islam Negeri Jurai Siwo Lampung for supporting this research.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

AHN, YA designed the study; AHN collected the data; YA supervised the study, reviewed the manuscript, and provided academic guidance.

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<https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1602.08>



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Kepala SMP Negeri 3 Metro



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Semester : 8 (Delapan)
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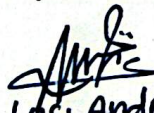
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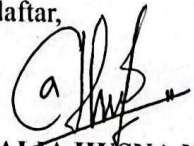
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Demikian Surat Permohonan ini saya sampaikan, atas perkenannya diucapkan terima kasih.

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Letter of Acceptance

Nomor: 135/6.(2)/JED-LoAVI/2026

Dear Authors

We are pleased to inform you that your paper entitled : **“A Descriptive Qualitative Study of Ninth-Grade Students’ Ability in Writing Recount Texts at SMP Negeri 3 Metro”**

Amalia Husna Nailuzzakiyah¹, Yeasy Agustina Sari²

^{1,2} Universitas Islam Negeri Jurai Siwo Lampung, Indonesia.

has been Accepted with Minor revisions for Volume 6 Number 02 of August 2026
JED: Journal of English Development.



Metro, June, 11st 2026



Editor in Chief
Journal of English Development



Rizky Hidayatullah, M.Pd.

CURRICULUM VITAE



The name of researcher is Amalia Husna Nailuzzakiyah. She was born in Metro on September 4th, 2004. She is the youngest child of Mr. Muhammad Sugeng and Mrs. Sri Mulyaningsih. The researcher has one older brother named Fairuz Heriyanto.

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In the future, she plans to continue her studies in a Japanese language training program at an LPK (Job Training Institute) before working in Japan. She also hopes to pursue a Master's degree (S2) after returning from Japan or while working there.