Weaknesses in Writing Narrative Texts among Fourth Grade Students at SD Negeri 79 Kota Bengkulu

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the weaknesses of fourth-grade students at SD Negeri 79 Bengkulu City in writing narrative compositions and to identify the contributing factors. The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal three main areas of weakness: content, language, and technical aspects. In terms of content, students' narratives often lack coherent plots, underdeveloped ideas, and unclear beginnings, middles, and endings. From the language aspect, students show limited vocabulary, frequent errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Technically, weaknesses are found in paragraph organization and ineffective sentence structures. These difficulties stem from internal factors, such as low motivation, limited vocabulary, and poor idea organization, as well as external factors, including monotonous teaching methods, insufficient teacher guidance, lack of family support, and the influence of environment and social media. The study highlights the need for varied teaching strategies, stronger collaboration between teachers and parents, and consistent literacy practices to improve students' narrative writing skills.

Keywords: narrative writing, writing difficulties, elementary school student

INTRODUCTION

Language skills constitute fundamental competencies that students must master in Indonesian language learning. These skills encompass listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which are interrelated and developed in an integrated manner. Tarigan (2021) asserts that these four language skills must be developed in a balanced way to enable students to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing. Among these four, writing is the most complex skill as it demands logical thinking, vocabulary mastery, understanding of linguistic structures, and precision in applying orthographic rules.

In the context of primary education, writing skills play a strategic role as a medium for students to express ideas, feelings, and experiences in written form. However, reality in the field indicates that many elementary school students still encounter difficulties in writing, particularly in narrative compositions. Tarigan (2015) suggests that students' weak writing skills are often caused by a lack of directed practice and limited vocabulary. This condition results in the low quality of students' writing in terms of content, linguistics, and technical aspects.

A narrative composition is a form of writing that presents a series of events chronologically to provide a meaningful experience to the reader. According to Keraf (2010), a narrative does not merely tell a story but also requires the ability to manage plot, characters, setting, and language in a coherent and systematic manner. Narrative writing instruction in elementary schools aims to train students to develop ideas systematically, use appropriate language, and foster creativity in storytelling (Hasanah et al., 2023). Nevertheless, many students still struggle with structuring the plot, developing ideas, and selecting appropriate diction.

Initial observations at SD Negeri 79 Kota Bengkulu revealed that the majority of fourth-grade students were unable to write complete and coherent narrative compositions. Students' writings tended to have unclear plots, underdeveloped ideas, and logically unorganized introductions, bodies, and conclusions. Furthermore, various linguistic errors were found, such as improper spelling, punctuation mistakes, and inconsistent capitalization. These findings align with Anjelita et al. (2023), who stated that the primary difficulties for students in narrative writing lie in idea organization and the application of linguistic conventions.

Weaknesses in writing narrative compositions are not only caused by technical factors but are also influenced by limited vocabulary mastery. Luthfiyah (2013) explains that vocabulary mastery, especially passive-receptive vocabulary, has a significant correlation with the ability to comprehend texts and express ideas in writing. Students with low vocabulary mastery tend to struggle with selecting the right diction, making their writing monotonous and less expressive. Siregar et al. (2021) emphasize that vocabulary limitations can hinder students' ability to develop ideas and construct effective sentences in narrative writing.

Beyond internal factors, external factors also play a role in students' writing weaknesses. Monotonous teaching methods, minimal teacher guidance during the writing process, and a lack of support from the family environment can affect students' writing motivation and skills. Qadaria et al. (2023) state that a lack of parental attention and environmental influences, including excessive social media use, can reduce the time and quality of students' learning. Therefore, writing instruction needs to be designed in a varied and contextual manner to increase active student engagement.

Various previous studies have shown a relationship between vocabulary mastery and writing skills. Fatmawati (2018) and Nisafatun Nur (2018) found that vocabulary mastery influences the ability to write exposition texts, while Endah Tri Wahyuningsih (2021) proved a high influence between vocabulary mastery and descriptive writing skills. However, most of these studies focused on secondary education or types of text other than narratives. Thus, there is still a research gap for an in-depth study of narrative writing weaknesses in elementary school students, specifically viewed from the aspects of content, linguistics, and technical execution.

Based on the aforementioned points, this research is crucial to comprehensively describe the forms of students' weaknesses in writing narrative compositions and the factors causing them. The research questions in this study are: (1) what are the forms of weaknesses found in the narrative writing of fourth-grade students at SD Negeri 79 Kota Bengkulu, and (2) what factors cause these weaknesses. The objective of this study is to identify and describe students' narrative writing weaknesses and their contributing factors as a basis for improving writing instruction strategies in elementary schools.

METHOD

This study is a qualitative research employing a descriptive approach. This approach is utilized to provide an in-depth depiction of students' weaknesses in writing narrative compositions and the naturally occurring factors causing them, in accordance with field conditions. The research was conducted in the fourth grade at SD Negeri 79 Kota Bengkulu. The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were obtained from fourth-grade students and their classroom teacher through students' narrative compositions and interviews. Meanwhile, secondary data were gathered from supporting documents, such as school archives, syllabi, and Indonesian language instructional documents.

The data collection techniques used include observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to monitor the learning process and students' conditions during writing activities. Semi-structured interviews were held with the teacher to obtain information regarding students' difficulties in narrative writing. Documentation was used to collect students' written works as material for analysis. Data analysis was performed qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. The validity of the data was maintained through technical and source triangulation (Winarni, 2021).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
a. Students' Weaknesses in Writing Narrative Compositions
The research findings indicate that the narrative writing ability of fourth-grade students at SD Negeri 79 Kota Bengkulu is still categorized as low and has not developed optimally. These weaknesses are evident in three primary aspects: content, linguistics, and technical writing. Regarding the content aspect, the majority of students have not been able to construct a coherent, logical, and chronological plot. The resulting compositions often lack a clear narrative structure, such as interconnected orientations, complications, and resolutions. This is supported by the assessment indicators used to analyze the quality of students' writing as follows:

Table 1. Assessment Indicators for Students' Writing

No.	Assessment Aspect/Indicator	Description	Common Weaknesses
1	Narrative Structure	Evaluates the completeness of narrative elements: orientation, complication, and resolution.	Lack of a clear climax or resolution.
2	Content-Theme Alignment	Ensures the composition aligns with the assigned or chosen topic.	Content deviates from the theme or lacks focus.
3	Plot (Cohesion & Coherence)	Logical and systematic sequence of events and interconnectedness between sentences/paragraphs.	Disjointed story, difficult to understand, or incoherent.
4	Language Use	Application of grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, and formal vocabulary.	Numerous spelling errors and ineffective sentences.
5	Vocabulary Usage	Use of varied and contextually appropriate words.	Limited vocabulary and inappropriate word choice.
6	Characterization & Setting	Clarity of characters, setting of place, and time.	No clear description of characters or settings.
7	Creativity & Imagination	Originality of the story and the ability to create engaging situations.	Overly simple, cliché, and unimaginative stories.
8	Length & Completeness	Sufficiency of words/paragraphs to support story development.	Compositions are too short and incomplete.

Based on the table above, many students write events directly without introducing characters or settings and end stories abruptly without adequate conflict resolution. These findings are consistent with previous studies by Agusti et al. (2021) and Ferdinal et al. (2024), which state that primary weaknesses in content include incoherent plots and unclear narrative structures (orientation-complication-resolution). Furthermore, the presented story ideas are often simplistic and underdeveloped due to a lack of detailed descriptions of atmosphere or emotions, as emphasized in studies by Sahno (2022) and Rahmayanti et al. (2023).

In the linguistic aspect, students' weaknesses at SD Negeri 79 Kota Bengkulu are apparent through frequent errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and limited vocabulary choices. Vocabulary limitations cause the writing to be monotonous and less expressive, a phenomenon also identified in research by Purwaty et al. (2022) and Zahara et al. (2023). Meanwhile, in terms of technical writing, students still struggle to construct cohesive paragraphs and effective sentences, where story ideas become difficult to comprehend due to incomplete or wordy sentences. The relevance of these assessment indicators is also found in the study by Mahfudhoh & Nuroh (2024), which shows that plot cohesion-coherence and the depth of character description are the most common areas of weakness among fourth-grade elementary students in general. This condition confirms that students require intensive guidance in applying basic narrative writing skills comprehensively.

b. Factors Causing Students' Weaknesses in Writing Narrative Compositions

Based on the interviews and observations, students' weaknesses in writing narrative compositions are influenced by various interrelated internal and external factors. Internal factors include low student motivation in writing activities, limited vocabulary mastery, and difficulties in organizing ideas into written form. Low writing motivation results in a lack of enthusiasm, low self-confidence, and a lack of earnestness in completing writing tasks assigned by the teacher. This finding is reinforced by Yulianti et al. (2024) and Purwaty et al. (2022), who state that psychological barriers such as low confidence significantly hinder the flow of ideas in narrative writing. Furthermore, vocabulary limitations make it difficult for students to choose appropriate words to describe events, characters, settings, and emotions, which prevents their ideas from being developed to their full potential, as also noted by Piliang et al. (2024) and Alimah & Indihadi (2022).

External factors affecting students' writing weaknesses include monotonous teaching methods that remain teacher-centered, a lack of continuous writing practice, and insufficient support from the family environment. Teacher-centric learning contributes to low student engagement and provides limited space for developing creative writing skills. This aligns with research by Zahara et al. (2023) and Riska & Rahmawati (2022), which emphasizes that without varied instructional strategies, students perceive writing as a mechanical burden rather than a creative process.

Moreover, the home literacy environment plays a crucial role. A weak reading culture at home limits students' vocabulary enrichment and general knowledge, which in turn negatively impacts their narrative writing ability. This condition is consistent with the findings of Ramadhani et al. (2023) and Suratni et al. (2023), which highlight that a lack of parental support in building literacy habits creates a gap in students' linguistic readiness. Therefore, the weakness in narrative writing at SD Negeri 79 Kota Bengkulu is a complex issue that requires comprehensive improvement through well-planned instruction, school environment support, and active parental involvement in fostering a literacy culture.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that fourth-grade students at SD Negeri 79 Kota Bengkulu still face significant weaknesses in writing narrative compositions, encompassing the aspects of content, linguistics, and technical writing. Regarding content, weaknesses are evident in disjointed plots and underdeveloped ideas. In the linguistic aspect, students frequently make errors in vocabulary usage, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Meanwhile, in technical terms, deficiencies appear in paragraph organization and the use of ineffective sentence structures.

These weaknesses are influenced by internal factors, such as low writing motivation, limited vocabulary mastery, and difficulties in organizing ideas, as well as external factors, including unvaried instructional methods, lack of writing practice, and limited support from the family environment. These findings indicate that students' narrative writing skills require more systematic attention and intervention. The implications of this study emphasize the importance of implementing contextual, gradual, and literacy-based writing instructional strategies. Recommendations for future research include examining the effectiveness of specific learning models or media in improving the narrative writing skills of elementary school students in a sustainable manner.

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