

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents some theories of research variables applied in this research. It describes the theories and explanations of recount text writing, especially through the use of diaries and their integration with effective teaching methodologies.

A. Definition of Writing Skills

Writing skills refer to the capacity to articulate ideas, thoughts, and emotions clearly and systematically through written language. Harmer (2020) emphasizes that writing is a dynamic process that involves generating ideas, organizing them logically, and expressing them using appropriate linguistic structures. In the context of language learning, writing is considered an active skill requiring the integration of cognitive, linguistic, and creative abilities. It necessitates precision in language use, critical thinking for effective communication, and creativity to engage readers. Mastering writing skills is foundational for learners to achieve coherence, clarity, and purpose in their written works.

The Importance of Writing Skills in Learning English as a Second or Foreign Language. Writing is a pivotal skill in learning English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL), as it allows learners to communicate their ideas effectively while supporting overall language development. Hyland (2018) highlights that writing reinforces essential language components, including grammar and vocabulary, and cultivates critical thinking and self-expression. Furthermore, writing is indispensable for academic success, enabling students to produce essays, reports, and research papers. In professional contexts, strong writing skills facilitate clear communication in emails, proposals, and

documentation. Additionally, writing fosters personal development by enabling individuals to reflect, express, and connect in a globalized and digital world (Nation & Macalister, 2019).

Challenges faced by students in developing writing skills. Acquiring proficient writing skills can be a daunting task for students, particularly in a second-language context. Common challenges include difficulties in structuring ideas logically, maintaining coherence, and adhering to grammatical conventions. Richards and Renandya (2020) observe that linguistic accuracy, especially in grammar and vocabulary, often poses significant obstacles for ESL/EFL learners. Moreover, psychological barriers such as writing anxiety and lack of confidence can undermine students' willingness to practice. The limited integration of authentic and engaging writing activities in traditional classrooms further hampers skill development. Addressing these challenges requires tailored instructional strategies that focus on both language mechanics and motivational support (Raimes, 2021).

B. Recount Texts

Definition and Characteristics of Recount Texts: Recount texts are narrative compositions that aim to recount past events or experiences in a structured, chronological sequence. According to Hyland (2018), recount texts are an essential genre in language education as they help students master sequencing and temporal language. These texts are characterized by the use of past-tense verbs, time connectors such as "then," "after that," and "finally," as well as a clear structure. Typically, a recount text comprises an orientation to set the scene, a sequence of events to narrate the occurrences, and a conclusion to summarize or reflect on the events. These elements enable students to organize their thoughts coherently while

practicing grammatical and lexical accuracy. Additionally, recount texts serve as a bridge between spoken and written language, fostering students' ability to articulate personal experiences and historical narratives effectively (Derewianka & Jones, 2018).

The primary aim of recount texts is to inform or entertain readers by retelling events engagingly and coherently. In the context of English curricula, recount texts are integral to developing students' narrative and descriptive abilities. Derewianka and Jones (2018) assert that this genre enhances students' proficiency in organizing ideas, constructing coherent narratives, and using grammatical structures associated with time. Additionally, recount texts encourage learners to reflect on personal or historical events, fostering a deeper connection to the content. Harmer (2020) highlights that integrating recount writing into classroom activities supports critical thinking, creativity, and linguistic precision. These texts also provide opportunities for learners to explore cultural contexts and personal experiences, making language learning more meaningful and engaging.

Recount texts are typically structured into three main sections: orientation, sequence of events, and conclusion. The orientation introduces the context, detailing the "who," "where," and "when" to set the stage for the narrative. The sequence of events follows, presenting actions in chronological order using past tense verbs and temporal markers such as "later," "next," and "finally." Finally, the conclusion offers a summary or reflection on the events, often providing a personal perspective or lesson learned. Linguistic features of recount texts include the predominant use of past-tense verbs, adverbs of time and place, and cohesive devices to ensure logical progression and clarity. Hyland (2018) emphasizes that these structural and linguistic elements enable learners to narrate experiences

effectively while reinforcing their command of English grammar and vocabulary. Incorporating these features into classroom instruction supports students in crafting clear and engaging recounts.

C. Using Dairy in Teaching Writing

Diaries are private journals used to document experience, thought, and observation, and offer an individual field of expression and reflection. When used in language teaching, diaries serve as devices for learning to foster knowledge of self and linguistic capacity. They fall into three categories: personal diaries, personal thoughts and experience; learning diaries, students' progress and challenges; and digital diaries or blogs, where technology is used to enable reflective and collaborative writing (Nunan, 2019). The variations cater to the needs and preferences of various learners in terms of offering possibilities for personalized and purposeful engagement with language. Personal diaries help students to translate their feelings into words and describe events, as learning diaries help them to think about their school life and record areas of improvement. Electronic diaries, as argued by Rosen and Salaway (2011), add an interactive dimension by providing space for peer comment and acquiring digital skills. By incorporating these forms of diaries into language training, instructors are able to develop a dynamic and supportive learning environment that accommodates the individual and collective needs of the learners.

The use of diaries in language acquisition offers a number of benefits that enhance the writing skills of students. The very first significant advantage is that diaries create personal expression, and the students possess a safe and non-threatening platform to give words to their thoughts and emotions. Hyland (2018) states that having this experience makes writing a more meaningful and enjoyable

experience that fosters motivation and interest. Furthermore, diary writing encourages reflective and creative thinking that enables students to expand their experience and ideas in more depth (Raimes, 2021). It not only enhances reflection but also critical thinking, which is of the utmost importance for good communication. Better critical thinking will lead to enhanced coherence in writing, vocabulary building, as well as internalization of grammatical structures through regular practice in the form of diaries. Susanti (2022) found that students who used daily diaries exhibited high performance in idea organization and appropriate use of past-tense verbs. Further, diary writing reduces anxiety about writing due to the shift of interest from formal evaluation to personal progress, as indicated by Harmer (2020). Overall, diaries are useful instruments that facilitate overall language learning through the synthesis of emotional, imaginative, and linguistic factors.

Previous research on the effectiveness of employing diaries in language learning. There has been research that pinpointed the effectiveness of diaries in enhancing the language skills of learners. Aisyah (2020) conducted research with high school students and found that employing diaries enhanced their ability to structure recount texts, use time markers, and maintain narrative coherence. Similarly, Widiyanto (2019) established that the students' anxiety in writing decreased and had a more interactive and reflective learning process due to writing diaries. The study revealed that students who wrote diaries became more confident in expressing themselves and improved grammatically. In addition, Putri and Hartono (2021) tested the influence of digital diaries on reading comprehension and determined that the integration of technology and writing diaries enhanced the recall of narrative structures and sequencing among students. Susanti (2022) demonstrated that diary writing enhanced vocabulary acquisition and past tense use,

which are crucial in writing a recount text. Although these are positive outcomes, researchers emphasize the importance of teacher intervention and structured implementation to gain the complete advantage of diary writing. A clear set of rules and constant feedback keep students motivated and focused towards the learning goals (Nunan, 2019; Harmer, 2020). These findings as a whole point to the pedagogical merit of diary writing as an inclusive and original means in language learning.

D. Using Diaries to Support Recount Writing Development

The use of diaries in writing instruction offers a meaningful and reflective approach to enhance students' abilities in composing recount texts. This instructional strategy is grounded in well-established educational theories, including cognitive process theory and constructivist learning theory, which emphasize active participation, personal expression, and mental engagement in the learning process.

One of the primary benefits of diary writing is its potential to increase student engagement. Nunan (2019) highlights that diary writing links language learning to students' personal experiences, making the activity more relevant and meaningful. When learners write about their daily lives, they are more likely to perceive writing as a purposeful and enjoyable task. Unlike traditional exercises that often prioritize grammatical accuracy and structure, diary writing encourages creativity, personal reflection, and emotional expression (Hyland, 2018). This sense of ownership can lead to greater motivation and consistency in writing practice.

Diary writing also aligns closely with the Cognitive Process Theory of Writing, as introduced by Flower and Hayes (1981). This theory outlines three essential stages in the writing process: planning, translating, and reviewing. In the context of diary writing:

1. Planning involves organizing thoughts and determining which experiences to document.
2. Translating refers to converting these thoughts into coherent sentences using appropriate vocabulary and grammar.
3. Reviewing entails rereading the written text to assess clarity, coherence, and accuracy, with revisions made if necessary.

These stages occur naturally during diary writing and help learners develop metacognitive awareness. According to Harmer (2020), regular engagement with these cognitive processes improves writing fluency and grammatical precision, both of which are crucial for writing recount texts effectively.

Furthermore, the practice of diary writing is strongly supported by Constructivist Learning Theory, particularly as proposed by Dewey (2018) and Vygotsky (1978). This theory posits that students learn best when they actively construct knowledge through real-life and socially meaningful experiences. Diary writing allows students to record personal events and reflections, thereby bridging the gap between classroom instruction and real-world application. Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) suggests that students can reach higher levels of competence with appropriate scaffolding. In this context, teachers can guide and support learners in improving their diary entries, thus enhancing their writing competence.

In addition, diary writing fosters critical thinking and introspection, as students are encouraged to analyze their experiences and determine the best way to express them. This reflective process is particularly beneficial in recount writing, which requires chronological sequencing, appropriate use of past tense verbs, and the integration of temporal markers. Nation and Macalister (2019) emphasize that diary-based writing not only enhances language skills but also promotes emotional engagement and personal development.

In summary, the integration of diary writing in the teaching of recount texts offers significant pedagogical advantages. It fosters student engagement, supports cognitive development, and encourages self-expression within a supportive and reflective environment. Through consistent diary writing practice, students are more likely to improve their writing fluency, coherence, and confidence, making it an effective strategy for developing recount writing skills in EFL classrooms.

E. Related Studies

Research on the use of diaries as a tool for enhancing writing skills has shown substantial positive outcomes, especially in the context of recount text writing. Aisyah (2020) conducted a study on the impact of diary writing on students' recount text skills and engagement. Her research found that diary writing significantly improved students' ability to structure their recount texts effectively, helping them articulate their experiences in chronological order. This method encouraged students to engage more deeply with the writing process, as they had the opportunity to reflect on personal experiences, which made writing more meaningful. Aisyah's findings align with the broader literature suggesting that writing about personal experiences fosters greater engagement and improves narrative skills (Hyland, 2018). Additionally, the reflective nature of diary writing

motivated students to continuously improve their writing and seek a more coherent narrative flow, demonstrating how personal connection to the task can lead to improved language use and storytelling skills.

Widiyanto (2019) explored how diary writing affected writing anxiety and narrative coherence among junior high school students. The study showed that students who regularly kept diaries exhibited reduced anxiety towards writing tasks, which often serves as a barrier to effective communication. Writing in diaries, as opposed to more formal assignments, provided a low-pressure environment where students could express their thoughts freely without the fear of immediate assessment. This supportive atmosphere enabled students to focus on content creation rather than the perfection of their grammar or syntax, thereby improving their narrative coherence. By encouraging free expression, diary writing reduced students' fear of making mistakes and helped them concentrate on organizing their ideas in a clear and logical sequence. Widiyanto's (2019) findings underscore the role of diary writing in alleviating anxiety, which has long been recognized as a significant obstacle in language learning (Raimes, 2021). This study contributes to the understanding of how diary writing can be an effective pedagogical tool in building confidence and improving narrative skills among students.

Putri and Hartono (2021) focused on the impact of diary writing on reading comprehension of recount texts. Their research demonstrated that engaging students in reflective writing through diaries significantly improved their ability to comprehend and retain information from recount texts. By linking their personal experiences to the events described in reading materials, students were able to make connections that deepened their understanding of the texts. This reflective learning process allowed students to analyze and internalize the structure of recount texts,

enhancing both their reading comprehension and writing skills. Additionally, the act of writing about these experiences in diaries encouraged students to use time markers and past tense forms more accurately, skills that are crucial for both writing and understanding recount texts. Putri and Hartono (2021) concluded that diary writing not only improves writing skills but also supports the development of critical thinking and reading comprehension. This aligns with the findings of Derewianka and Jones (2018), who emphasized the importance of engaging students in meaningful tasks that combine reading and writing for deeper learning outcomes.

F. Research Gap

While previous studies have shown that diary writing improves general writing skills and student motivation, they rarely examine its specific impact on recount text writing in EFL classrooms. Most research focuses on reflective benefits or affective outcomes, not on measurable improvements in content, organization, and grammar in recount texts. Moreover, very limited studies apply a rigorous experimental method to test their effectiveness at the vocational school level. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by using quantitative analysis (ANCOVA) to evaluate whether diary writing significantly enhances recount text writing performance among SMKS students.